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LOUISIANA



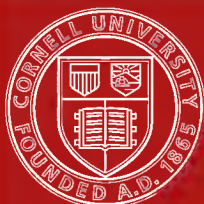
MARY · DEVEREUX

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Lafitte of Louisiana

By

MARY DEVEREUX

*Author of "From Kingdom to Colony," "Up and Down
the Sands of Gold," etc.*

Illustrated by

HARRY C. EDWARDS

Boston

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TO
MY PUBLISHERS
AS A TOKEN OF MY GRATITUDE
FOR THEIR
CONFIDENCE AND ENCOURAGEMENT

Preface

IN that part of the United States where breezes from the Mexican gulf sway lazily the long pendants of Spanish moss festooning the gnarled limbs of ancient oaks, the name of Jean Lafitte lives to-day in an atmosphere of romance more virile and fascinating than that surrounding the exploits of Columbus, Cortez, or Ponce de Leon.

History says that, in 1809, Jean and Pierre Lafitte came to New Orleans at a time when, owing to the disturbed conditions resulting from protracted warfare abroad, that city and the territory of Louisiana were receiving immigrants from almost every portion of the civilized world.

The authentic story of Jean Lafitte ends six years later, shortly after the battle of New Orleans, a victory said to have been rendered possible only by his loyalty and intelligence, supplemented by the skill and bravery of the Baratarians whose leader he was.

Many are the legends concerning the origin, achievements, and end of this remarkable man; and these still find numberless believers in that section of Louisiana lying between the Calcasieu and Mermentau rivers.

One of the most accepted relates to a strange tie between the so-called "Pirate of the Gulf" and Napoleon Bonaparte.

This is embodied in a number of stories, one of them being to the effect that it was Lafitte who, after the battle

of New Orleans,—when he disappeared from Louisiana,—brought the emperor from Elba to France; and that, after the “Hundred Days,” it was he who arranged to bring Napoleon to America. It is claimed that, when the latter’s flight was intercepted and he entered upon his compulsory voyage to St. Helena, Lafitte carried to this country a large amount of the emperor’s treasure, and buried it somewhere along the Calcasieu River, after which, hoping for a favorable opportunity to release Napoleon, he sailed to meet the fleet which bore the emperor to exile.

Of Jean Lafitte’s career, it may be said, from what is known of it and by reason of the inferences to be drawn from established facts, that it was one of adventure and peril comparing well with those of the men who, in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, sought wealth and fame in the new world. As to the man himself, he was, by nature and education, infinitely superior to these others. True to his ancestry and to himself, he was actuated by high motives and loyal instincts, and rendered invaluable services to the country in which he passed a short period of his eventful life.

*AS the insect from the rock
Takes the color of its wing ;
As the boulder from the shock
Of the ocean's rhythmic swing
Makes itself a perfect form
Learns a calmer front to raise ;
As the shell, enamelled, warm
With the prism's mystic rays
Praises wind and wave that make
All its chambers fair and strong ;
As the mighty poets take
Grief and pain to build their song ;
Even so for every soul,
Whatso'er its lot may be,
Building, as the heavens roll,
Something large and strong and free,—
Things that hurt and things that mar
Shape the man for perfect praise ;
Shock and strain and ruin are
Friendlier than the smiling days.*

CHADWICK.

Illustrations

FROM DRAWINGS BY HARRY C. EDWARDS

“ ‘ Is it thee, my beloved Pizarro ? ’ ”	<i>Frontispiece</i>
“ ‘ I will give you this ring of mine ’ ”	<i>Page</i> 79
“ ‘ Lopez, make haste with the gun ! ’ ”	“ 158
“ ‘ Then, Sire, give me the privilege of serving you ’ ” .	“ 246
“ He told . . . of all the persons connected with his life ”	“ 421

Lafitte of Louisiana



CHAPTER ONE

PARIS, in the year 1790, and the garden of the Tuileries bright with the sunshine of an autumnal day. Two boys, seated in the grass near a path not far from one of the ponds, were playing with a turtle they had captured.

The humble origin of the elder, a lad of thirteen, was evidenced by those physical signs which are usually associated with people of his class; but the other, three years younger, bore all the indications of gentle birth. His sire was a baron of the "ancien régime," while Pierre's father had been a peasant, and his widowed mother the faithful nurse of her who had lived but two months after giving birth to the boy Jean, whom Margot loved as her own Pierre.

They were two ingenuous, fine-spirited boys, but indirectly and slightly affected by the shifting political conditions about them, and finding full pleasure in each passing hour.

Young Jean's life had been without marked incident until this October day, when fate set the shuttle to weave a fabric in which the golden thread of a love above the love of man for woman began to outline its pattern.

It was a fabric which the future was to fill in with many strange events,—whose design, as it grew, was to be

clouded by violence and bloodshed, marred by ambition and selfishness, crossed by other loves of men and women. And yet the first golden gleams of the thread that made the beginning kept its brightness to the end, in a strong, ever-deepening love.

The lads, while occupied and amused with their captive, had noticed a young man, slender, and under the medium height, in the uniform of a *sous-lieutenant*, who, with hands clasped behind him, was slowly pacing the path. He was apparently busy with his own thoughts, although occasionally, in passing, he glanced at the boys, as if attracted by their conversation and laughter.

Back and forth he paced; and once Jean, raising his head, met the full, calm gaze of the officer's gray-blue eyes. It was only a careless glance, but it so affected the boy that his tongue was silent for several moments, while his dark eyes followed the retreating figure.

Presently there came along the promenade a trio of court gallants, attired in the extreme of the prevailing fashion, beruffled, bejewelled, and perfumed. One of them was a slenderly built young man, whose sharp features, pale-blue eyes set closely together, thin lips, and weak chin, gave ample proof of his nature and disposition.

A more striking contrast to the younger boy could not well be imagined. Yet the same blood ran in their veins, for the new-comer was Étienne, Jean's half-brother, who had, for some time past, been occupying an unimportant position at court.

He espied the two boys before they noticed him, so engrossed were they in heading-off the turtle, whose instinct seemed to tell it how to find a way to the near-by pond.

The three courtiers paused in the pathway; and Étienne, stepping quickly over the grass, gave the turtle a well-directed kick that sent it splashing into the water.

He and his friends then laughed boisterously, while Jean and Pierre sprang to their feet, the former's eyes blazing angrily as they met those of his half-brother.

"Sneaking spoil-sport! How dared you?" cried the boy.

"Dared!" repeated Étienne jeeringly, while his companions again laughed uproariously. "*Mais*, you impudent young cub, I think it were well to cool your temper by sending you after your turtle." With this he seized Jean by the collar, as if to throw him into the pond.

The lad, mute with passion, struck out fiercely with his fists, until Étienne, his rage making him forget his dandyism and fine raiment, grasped more firmly the jewelled cane he carried, and began to rain blows upon the head and shoulders not so very far below his own not great height, while he held fast to Jean's collar with a grip whose firmness was out of keeping with his frail and puny build.

Pierre, with sullen face, and a smouldering fire burning in his heavy-lidded eyes, stood by, with clenched fists, not daring to put into force his evident desire to come to his foster-brother's aid, while the two gallants looked on with manifest amusement.

A clear, icy-toned voice suddenly cut the air like a flash of steel.

"Pardon, monsieur; but would you not like assistance?"

The two courtiers turned quickly to look at the speaker. And Étienne, as if the tone of unmistakable sarcasm had recalled his vanity to the spectacle he was making of himself, loosened his hold upon Jean, who, in no wise impressed by the interruption, exclaimed through his clenched teeth, as he shook himself free from the tormentor's grasp, "Étienne, thou brutal coward, when I am a man I will kill thee for this!"

Étienne's companions, hearing the familiar manner in which he was addressed, looked at him in surprise; and he, noting this, turned to the stranger with an insolence which increased as he observed the latter's uniform, indicating such an humble military rank.

It was the *sous-lieutenant*, whose look had affected Jean so oddly a short time before.

"I have been an unintentional spectator of your unmanly conduct, monsieur," continued the young officer, in the same low, even tone, as he calmly faced Étienne; "and what I have heard and seen of its beginning compels me to take the part of this young gentleman you have so needlessly abused and angered."

"*Dame!* Who are you, to dare speak to me in such fashion?" Étienne demanded furiously, his white fingers again gripping the cane in a way suggestive of a desire to use it in a new quarter, while he advanced a few steps toward the *sous-lieutenant*, who stood with his hands still clasped behind his back, and a fine scorn touching the severe line of his lips.

"I am an officer, monsieur, as you can see," he replied, his tone in keeping with his disdainful composure; "and one who, by training as well as by nature, cannot but object to see such a display of cowardice in any man, be he courtier or simple citizen."

"*Mille tonnerres!*" cried Étienne, white with rage. "But you shall answer for such insolence!"

"As you please, monsieur, and whenever you shall say," replied the *sous-lieutenant*, glancing past him at the two boys, who were now close to one another, directly behind Étienne, their faces filled with surprise and satisfaction at seeing him thus brought to bay.

One of Étienne's companions, seeing a gendarme coming toward them, called attention to the fact; and the former, noticing several promenaders pause, as if curious to know what might be amiss, submitted to his friends' urgings, and moved away.

"I know you for what you are, you Corsican beggar," he hissed, backing off over the grass; "and never fear but that I will remember." Then he turned, and the trio departed.

The officer did not deign to look after them, and an-

swered carelessly the query of the gendarme. But what he said sent the latter strolling after the young men, as if considering that there might be need for him to keep an eye upon them while within the garden.

When he was gone, the *sous-lieutenant* joined the two boys, who were now standing by the edge of the pond, searching for some trace of their late captive.

As he approached, Jean looked up at him, and, with characteristic impulsiveness, caught one of his hands, while Pierre, with a peasant's dumbness, gazed at him with an admiration his stupid tongue would never have been able to express.

"I love you for that!" exclaimed the younger boy, his face aglow with enthusiasm. "Ah, but it was a fine thing to see Étienne balked, for once!"

"And who is this Étienne?" inquired the officer, scowling, as he looked down at the water.

"My half-brother."

"Your half-brother!" repeated the questioner, his voice showing surprise. "*Sacre!* Your life must be a pleasant one, if what I saw be a fair sample of his usual mood and manners."

Jean, with all the cause he had for complaint, possessed — especially considering his lack of years — an unusual sense of pride as to family affairs; and this made him silent. But it was the silence of angry eyes, and flushed cheeks; a silence that had no need of words to express his conviction of oppressive injustice, coupled with a deep hatred of him who exercised it.

This day was followed by many another, which at irregular intervals through the next two years, found the man and boy together; and a strong, loyal love sprang up between these two, so far apart in age, and still farther in their respective natures.

The frank, ingenuous lad, with his fresh, pure individuality, free from worldly craft as the woods and fields about his loved Languedoc home, talked unrestrainedly with the

friend whom he idolized as a newly found hero; while the latter forgot oftentimes his already stirring love of power, and his secret hopes for ambitious ends. The forgetting brought a new expression to his pale face, softening it, and touching with a strange tenderness the cold, inscrutable eyes.

CHAPTER TWO

SEASONS came and passed — springs, summers, falls, and winters, — to be strung, like beads, upon the rosary of time; and nearer were drawing those bloody days of France, which are to live forever, with their gory hue undimmed, although the crimson flow that stained them has been dried by the suns of many years.

In late April of 1792, Monsieur le Baron was still domiciled at his Paris house, and early April usually found him in his Languedoc château.

For two years past, Étienne — the simpering coxcomb of twenty-seven — had retained his position at court; and the atmosphere thus brought about his father tended to throw the latter more into the company of former friends, many of whom were deep in political intrigues, and sought to claim him, after his dozen years' absence from their circles.

At the suppers and card parties which made unusual gayety in his father's long-closed house, Jean was admitted with the freedom of an acknowledged favorite. Keen of wit, and somewhat precocious, owing to the intimate companionship of Monsieur le Baron, he absorbed the talk going on around him, and assimilated it with an intelligence to which his elders gave no thought.

The boy had theories of his own, vague though they were, in regard to almost everything within his environment; and he was, besides, deeply interested in a dream-world of which those about him — with the exception of Pierre — knew nothing. Yet he was in close touch with the present; and the history and politics of France were, from his reading, and his attention to the conversation of

his father's guests, — they being of all political parties, — as familiar to him as though he had been many years older.

Still, there was little in his appearance to suggest the student. Unusually tall for his years, he had a slender, sinewy body, and limbs whose muscles had been thoroughly developed under the careful tutelage of old Tatro, the baron's butler, who, until middle life had been a soldier.

It was he who had taught Jean to ride and shoot; and he had initiated the lad — young as the latter was — into the intricacies of foil and rapier practice.

The strong young throat rose proudly, to support a well-poised head, where the waving hair clustered in picturesque luxuriousness at the back, and fell in shorter, loosely curling rings over the forehead, under whose arched brows — swart, like the long silken lashes — the frank dark eyes looked out fearlessly upon the world. The smooth olive of his skin was somewhat browned by a healthful out-door life; but the peachy hue of babyhood still showed in his cheeks. The rather large mouth was shapely, with clean-cut lips, that, in parting, showed strong white teeth, as even as the keys of a spinet.

The high insteps, the long, slender fingers — these bespoke his patrician blood, no less than did his refinement of manner and speech; and there was about him a magnetic ingenuousness which drew all hearts.

Affairs in Paris were becoming more and more unsettled. The lawlessness and brutality of the masses grew in strength and daring, and many of the nobles had fled from France, or buried themselves in the country, away from the violence which they were helpless to prevent, or too loyal to seemingly countenance by their presence and neutrality.

It was early in the summer when, with many misgivings as to the future, Monsieur le Baron finally left Paris and retired to his country place in Languedoc. Jean, together with Margot, her boy Pierre, and a majority of the servants, went with him; but a few of the latter remained at the

Paris house with Étienne, who, detesting the quiet life of Languedoc, refused flatly to go there.

Another reason for his determination lay in the fact that he was now — secretly, of course — in Robespierre's employ; a thing Monsieur le Baron suspected, but of which he had no absolute proof; and the servants who stopped with the young man were Revolutionary in sentiment.

At the beloved old country-house, where everything was more to his taste than in any other spot on earth, Jean forgot much of what had filled the air of Paris with such horror. He and Pierre, rioting in vigorous health, went roaming about, hunting in the park for small game, or, hidden away snugly in a remote part of the wood, devoured a book of travels which told of pirates and soldiers of fortune, who had reaped many a harvest of riches upon the Spanish main.

This book was the key-note of Jean's dream-world; and it had long been a pastime of the boys that he should read it aloud, while Pierre listened with absorbed attention.

Thus it was that the exploits of De Soto, Pizarro, Cortez, and the minor leaders of adventurous bands were, for these two boys, the ideals of what their own careers should be when manhood set them free to achieve their ambitions.

The gardens about the place were a wilderness of bloom, left very much to nature, and entirely free from the marks of that formal science that showed in the generality of French gardens — the style which had come into vogue with Le Notre, in the time of Louis XIV.

They were, like the whole place, old and irregular, but full of restfulness to a home-loving heart in accord with nature. The trees, filled with birds, the massed flowers, and thickets of blooming shrubs, the butterflies floating on gorgeous wings — all these made the place a small world of itself, and one filled with peace and contentment.

But outside the park, where the boys were not permitted to go, it was easy to realize something of the turmoil that

was shaking Paris, miles away, and also the country nearer about, where the peasants were holding meetings, secret at first, but becoming more open as the Jacobins waxed stronger with each successive day.

The principal leader and speaker among the peasantry was one Tomas Fauchel, who had recently come from Paris, and who appeared, for some reason, to have an especial hatred for Monsieur le Baron. But the latter, whose attention was engrossed by his books and papers, knew nothing of this, as he rarely went abroad, and seemed to grow more reserved and gloomy as the days wore on.

The 14th of July — the anniversary of the French nation's independence — came and went; and, on the night of August 10th, the Assembly having removed from Paris all the regiments suspected of being loyal to the king, there was no armed force to resist the mob that, insane with blood-thirsty passion, broke into the Tuileries, butchered the king's attendants, and took away, as prisoners, the few who were still alive.

The royal family had, at the beginning of the attack, fled for protection to the chamber of the Assembly; and that body passed them on to martyrdom in the Temple.

Over the château at Languedoc, that August night, the same stars that glittered above the carnage of Paris shone upon a scene of peace. But Monsieur le Baron's heart was growing heavier, and his wakeful eyes were fixed upon the stars, as he lay in bed looking out of the window. A foreboding of evil crept chillingly about him, and a note of coming woe seemed to sigh in the wind stirring among the olive and pepper trees that made a small grove outside.

But in his chamber beyond, Jean, unconscious and happy, slept a sleep such as could never more be known on earth by the king's little son, whom, only a few months since, the two lads — Jean and Pierre — had looked at with worshipful awe, as a being infinitely above themselves, and one who could by no possibility ever experience the hard brunts of life.

Viewed in the light of such a change, men seem but little better than the pieces upon a chess-board. Fate and time are invincible powers, moving pawns into the knights' squares, and sweeping kings, queens, and knights into oblivion.

CHAPTER THREE

THROUGH the weeks of the late summer, old Tatro, the butler, had been attending the meetings held by the peasants. But, being a firm believer in the old régime, he had reported faithfully to Monsieur le Baron all that had transpired at these gatherings, telling him of the vicious speeches made by Fauchel, and of the latter's evident determination to influence the peasants against the people of the château.

His master listened patiently, while a smiling scorn touched his face, now growing haggard with care and anxiety. The once strong shoulders had become stooping, and not a single dark hair was to be seen amid the white ones covering the head held so proudly erect in former years.

On a certain September morning, after one of these reports from Tatro, the baron said, "Find Margot, and send her to me."

When the faithful old servant had left the room his master looked out of the window toward the park; but his darkly circled eyes saw something quite different from the trees silhouetted against the cloudless blue of the sky.

They saw the pale, angry face of Tomas Fauchel, the young schoolmaster, who, meeting the baron as he came from the magistrate's door with the pretty, sixteen-year-old daughter of the Huguenot minister clinging to his arm, had said, as he barred their way, "To-day, Monsieur le Baron, you have won, and have taken for wife her whom her dead father gave to me when he refused you, a Papist. But I warn you to beware of the day when I shall seek my revenge!"

The baron, in the strength of his vigorous manhood, and in the happy dreams of his passionate love, had laughed at the melodramatic threat of his humble rival. And to-day, white-haired and lonely, he smiled disdainfully as he recalled it.

But the smile died swiftly in a sigh that was almost a moan, at thought of the narrow mound he had looked upon the spring before, banked with violets and snow-drops, in the old churchyard by the Loire, near the cottage where he had known a brief year's dream of happiness.

He seemed again to be lifting the girlish form from which the breath had but just fled — lifting it from the pillows, to lie upon his broad chest, as he besought his young wife to speak to him, refusing to believe the awful truth told him by the weeping Margot while she took the babe who had been lying upon his mother's arm, and cuddled him against her own neck as she murmured, "Hush thee, little Jean, now my own little Jean; for thy Margot must be the only mother thou canst ever know."

But he now roused himself as Margot entered, and bade her to be seated.

She obeyed silently, wondering what he might want of her.

"Margot, I have sent for thee that I may unburden my mind somewhat as to matters which have been weighing heavily upon me for many months past," he began, leaning an elbow on his desk, while he looked at her intently.

"Yes, Monsieur le Baron," she responded, sitting with clasped hands, and with a look of apprehension in her honest eyes; for it was long since her master had honored her with an interview.

"Thou has ever been a faithful caretaker of my little son and his interests; and as such, I trust thee," he continued, his glance wandering from hers, out through the window back of her, as he saw the mist of tears dimming her eyes.

"I have ever tried to keep my promise to his dying

mother, Monsieur le Baron; and then, too, I love the child as if he were my own."

"That I know well," the baron said, in a tone of the greatest kindness; "and, so knowing, I wish to make sure of his future welfare, and thine as well, let what will befall me."

Margot looked at him in silent wonder mingled with some alarm, as she could see no reason for his words, nor for the mood which seemed to inspire them.

"These are troublous times," he resumed more calmly, and dropping the familiar manner of speech he had previously used; "times when but a few hours suffice to turn affairs from apparent security into confusion and danger. We have so far been unmolested; but, if I may judge from what I hear, this cannot long continue. I wish, therefore, to place a considerable sum of money in your care, for I feel that perhaps it may be safer with you than with me. It is all I have of my own to give Jean; and it will relieve me to know that, no matter what may come to me, or however Étienne may seek to rob the boy, my Jean will never know actual want."

The baron was now standing by the side of his desk; and pressing the edge of a panel in the oaken wainscoting, it flew open, disclosing a small recess, wherein were a small metal box and a number of little canvas bags.

"Come here," he said, turning to look at Margot over his shoulder.

She came to his side.

"See," he explained; "you do so, and so," showing her how to manipulate the secret spring. Then, after closing the panel, he added, "See now if you can open it."

She did so, and the panel opened again.

"Ah, that is well. Now you know where the boy's fortune is hidden, and I trust you to guard it for him. The bags contain gold coin, and the box holds a few jewels, that are his, as they were his mother's; also some papers, for which the future may show need, should any one seek

to deprive him of his rights as my son. I shall leave it to your discretion as to when and where you will take them from their present hiding-place."

"Why should I wish to do this, Monsieur le Baron?" she ventured to ask.

"It may be necessary, in order to insure their better safety, should events make it expedient, or you be forced to leave this house with Jean, by reason of anything befalling me, so that I cannot protect him against Étienne, or otherwise guard his welfare. Remember, Margot, I charge you solemnly, that when I am not here, if — if I am taken away, you remove Jean from Étienne's rule."

"But what mean you, Monsieur le Baron? — is it that you know of any danger threatening?"

"No — no," he answered wearily, resuming his seat, while Margot remained standing before him. "Only it is well to be watchful and foreseeing in such times as the present. It is well for you to know what I have said and shown to you; for, no matter what may come, no other soul can know of this hiding-place, nor of what is within it. And if I am gone, then I trust you, above all others, to protect my boy's future, and provide for his welfare."

"That will I do with my life!" Margot declared fervently.

The baron rose from his chair, and taking her brown, toil-worn hand, raised it to his lips with the same deference he would have shown a lady of his own rank.

"That thou hast proved these many years, my faithful Margot; and I bless thee for it."

It was toward sunset that same day when Jean came running in to announce that he had seen soldiers riding up the winding roadway that led through the park.

Bidding the boy keep out of sight until the cause of such a visit could be ascertained, Monsieur le Baron descended to the reception-room, where the officer in command of the soldiers soon presented himself, and delivered a letter from Couthon, in which the baron's hospitality was requested for the bearer and his escort.

The fact was that Étienne, recently angered by his father's refusal to increase his already liberal allowance, had, with characteristic villany, let fall some insinuations impeaching the latter's loyalty to the Revolutionary cause; and the officer, who had been ordered upon a mission which would take him several leagues beyond the château, was instructed to stop there upon his return, the object being that the Committee might, from the manner in which the baron received his uninvited guests, form a better idea as to his true sentiments.

The officer himself knew nothing of this — nothing more than that he had been given a letter of introduction to the baron, and directed to seek quarters at the château, rather than at an inn.

Monsieur le Baron received him with dignified courtesy, and having read the letter, was not long in suspecting the true import of such an unusual proceeding. But he evinced no sign of this as he said, "One soldier should always be welcome at the house of another, monsieur; and such hospitality as mine affords is entirely at your command. I will give directions that your men shall be cared for properly; and you yourself will honor me by becoming my guest."

"Then you have seen service, Monsieur le Baron?" inquired the officer, looking with increased interest at his host, who had drawn himself up to the full height of his once stalwart form.

"Yes; but as a much younger man. I was with Montcalm, in the Netherlands, and also served with him in North America. In fact I was by his side when he died, at Quebec, in '59."

"Indeed! He was a gallant soldier, by all accounts."

"A finer soldier never served the king; and a better man never gave his life for France. But" — with a deep sigh — "such things are of the past. I am now a recluse, giving but scant attention to outside affairs."

The officer was about to reply, when the baron added,

as if not unwilling to end the interview, "I will have you shown to your apartments, in order that you may refresh yourself after your journey. We dine at seven."

Jean, meanwhile, mindful of his father's command, did not deem it wise to present himself until the dinner hour should arrive, but had passed the time in questioning Margot and Tatro as to the probable meaning of this strange invasion of the château's privacy. Then, going into the dining-room with an unusually subdued air, although his heart was fluttering with excitement, the lad's shyness evaporated in a glad shout at sight of the officer standing before the fireplace, where burning logs made cheerful the apartment and warmed the chill evening air.

"Aha!" he cried, precipitating himself upon his father's guest, whose arms went quickly around the boyish form. "Is it thee, my beloved Pizarro?"

"Truly it is, little Monsieur de Soto," answered Lieutenant Bonaparte, laughing as he kissed Jean's flushed cheeks, while the baron looked on with amazement, and old Tatro paused in the report he was making as to the soldiers' dinner in the outer hall, to stare with equal surprise at these demonstrations of affection between the stranger and his master's son.

When they were seated the officer explained to Monsieur le Baron — although in a way not to bring in the name of Étienne — how he had come to know the boy; and Jean, now quite in his element, and entirely at ease, rattled on after a fashion that relieved his father from any extra effort in entertaining his guest.

CHAPTER FOUR

IT was nearing ten o'clock. The officer and his host were seated in the drawing-room, having a game of chess, with Jean, very proud and correspondingly sleepy, because of sitting up so long beyond his usual bed-time, watching them from a near-by divan, when Tatro, his face and voice showing the greatest alarm, rushed into the room and exclaimed, "*Mon Dieu*, Monsieur le Baron! The peasants! A great crowd of them are coming up the avenue! Hark—you can hear their shouts!"

The chessmen and board fell to the floor as both players sprang from their chairs; and Jean, all sleepiness banished from his eyes, stood beside them.

Some of the windows were open; and the sound of voices, both hoarse and shrill, but all shouting menacingly, could be heard, evidently drawing nearer to the house.

"Call my soldiers at once," ordered Bonaparte, speaking to Tatro. "Monsieur le Baron," he added, turning to him, "we will do all in our power for your protection."

The baron grasped the young man's extended hand as he called to Tatro, who was hurrying away, "See to it that all the windows and shutters are closed on this floor, and that all the outer doors are barred. And call every servant here to me."

"Ah, Monsieur le Baron," wailed the old man, pausing on the threshold, "they have fled—the cowards!"

"Indeed," said his master, grimly. "Then make your own hands do double duty; and we ourselves will see to these fastenings."

Tatro fled to execute his missions, while the baron and his guest, with Jean's assistance, closed and barred the windows and shutters of the drawing-room, and then went out into the great entrance-hall, where ancestral portraits looked down from the dusky oak panels, and the light caught the glint of steel from weapons of war and of the chase. Several suits of armor, looking like knights of old, stood upon pedestals, and, in the uncertain light, seemed as if imbued with mysterious life.

The dozen soldiers had appeared, and were ordered to post themselves in the hall, where they stood, with ready arms, behind their commander and the baron, who were nearer the stoutly barred door, listening to the wild hubbub of voices now close to the château.

The defenders had been joined by Pierre, armed, as was Tatro, when Margot appeared, to urge Jean and Pierre to come and share her retreat on the floor above.

The former stood beside his father, who now — as if noticing his presence for the first time — commanded him to do as Margot had asked, and bade Pierre accompany him.

The boys obeyed silently; but as they went up the stairway, preceded by Margot, their steps were reluctant, and their backward glances needed no words to express the disappointment felt by the two at being shut away from the promised excitement.

"Go you above also, Tatro," said the baron, "and look from an upper window. Then report to us as to how many you make out to be composing this gathering of *canaille*."

"Go you with him, Greloire, and report the same, with whatever else you may see," added the lieutenant, addressing a stalwart, bright-faced young soldier in the front rank.

While he was speaking, heavy blows began to fall upon the oaken door, and insolent voices demanded that it be opened, while shouts, jeers, and execrations made a tumult of sound outside.

Suddenly there came a sharp crashing, followed by tinklings of showering glass, as the panes of the one narrow window high up to the left of the door were broken by missiles from outside.

The opening was too high for the assailants to effect an entrance without using a ladder; and shouts were heard, urging that one be found.

The lieutenant waited until there was a lull in the noise; then, raising his voice, he called out, "Have a care what you do, for the baron is not without protectors. I am an officer of the Assembly; and in its name I bid you disperse."

There was silence, as if those outside were surprised at signs of an unexpected resistance.

"Again I tell you to disperse," said the lieutenant, in a tone whose ringing notes could be readily heard by the mob.

"Don't listen to him; he lies," shouted a voice outside. "'Tis but a trick of that rascally royalist of a baron. Here comes the ladder; up with it, and into the window. Let there be death to all inside. *Vive la République!*"

The words ended in a wild yell, taken up and repeated by many other voices, while those within heard the sound as of a ladder clattering against the wall.

Then the air was profaned by oaths, as some of the rabble shouted, "'Tis too short! There was another — many others! Get them, and join them, to make the long one we need! No — there was a long fruit-ladder; get it, some of you!"

These were some of the ejaculations heard by the besieged, followed by the voice which seemed to belong to the leader of the mob.

"*Peste!* The fiend take them for blundering fools! Why did they not bring the fruit-ladder — the longest one?"

The lieutenant appeared now to have decided upon a plan of action, for he turned from the door, just as Gre-

loire, followed by Tatro, came from above stairs and reported what they had seen from a window in one of the darkened rooms.

There were more than fifty men outside; with them were some women; and Tomas Fauchel was their leader. They had but few firearms, their weapons being, for the most part, clubs and staves, together with pikes and hatchets. Some of them were armed even with shovels and tongs, it being evident that any available instrument had been caught up when the rabble sallied forth to murder the supposed defenceless household, thus leaving the château free for pillaging.

"Monsieur le Baron, will you permit me to arrange the defence as I see fit?" inquired the young officer, turning to his host.

"Most assuredly, sir; for I have full confidence in your ability," was the reply.

"Then extinguish every light in this hall, and close all the doors leading from it, so that all here will be in darkness," said the lieutenant, now speaking authoritatively. "And do you, Greloire," — looking toward his soldiers — "with Murier and Lebœuf, stand here beside Monsieur le Baron. Watch that broken window, and put a ball into every head that appears there."

Greloire saluted silently, and the officer continued: "If Tatro will act as guide, to pilot myself and the others out through some unobserved way, we will make a *détour*, and treat our friends to an attack in the flank."

He had scarcely finished speaking when one of the suits of armor fell with a resounding clang from its pedestal; and the lieutenant, supposing the mishap came from the carelessness of one of the soldiers who were closing the doors leading to the lighted apartments, was about to utter a reprimand, when Jean, looking greatly abashed, arose from his hiding-place, betrayed by the untimely falling of his cover.

The smiles that came to the soldiers' faces passed away

instantly, as the baron exclaimed sternly, "Jean, what means this? Go above at once, and remain, as I commanded thee!"

The boy started to obey, when the lieutenant, who, at the head of his men, was passing near the foot of the stairway, paused, and said kindly, laying a hand on Jean's shoulder, "Know you not, my De Soto, that the first and bravest act of a soldier is to obey orders?"

The touch, the tone, no less than the words and the smile which accompanied them, awoke a yearning in the boy's heart to be one of the soldiers fortunate enough to receive orders from the speaker, who now followed Tatro, while Jean sped to the floor above, where Margot had long since extinguished the lights.

He found Perre standing by the window from which Tatro and Greloire had made their recent reconnaissance. The room was in complete darkness, while thick ivy upon the walls outside overhung the window, making dense the shadows, and better concealing an observer from the sight of those below.

"See, Jean; they are bringing a fruit-ladder. They intend to climb through the window they have broken," whispered Pierre, as the other lad came beside him, and the two looked down upon the swaying, yelling crowd distinctly visible by the light of their torches.

"Jean, Jean, my treasure, if thou wilt but come away from the window!" Margot's voice whispered. "Pierre, why dost thou not do as I bade thee? If thou wouldst come far back into the room, so would he. Why can either of you care to look down upon such wickedness?"

Margot's tone was in keeping with her words; but, while speaking, she came still nearer to the window, and leaned over the boys' heads, in order to obtain a better look herself.

"Hist, Margot! Wait—wait a moment, until the first man shall dare climb up and show his head at the broken window, for then we shall see rare sport," whispered Jean,

impatiently. "I heard him — my Pizarro — tell his soldiers to shoot at every head they saw there; and they have made the hall as dark as it is up here, so that those who mount the ladder cannot see within. And my Pizarro and some of his soldiers have gone out with Tatro to attack the rabble in the 'flank,' as I heard him say."

"Ah — ah, but 't is all most horrible!" murmured Margot, as she withdrew her head from the window. "What has come to the people, that they will think of ill-treating a master who has never shown them aught but kindness?"

Then, as if remembering something, she added, "Jean, why dost call the young officer by such a wrong name? His proper name is Bonaparte — Lieutenant Bonaparte; for so his soldiers told me."

Whatever might have been the boy's reply was checked by the report of a musket in the hall below, followed by the sound as of a body falling from the ladder outside. Then came a fresh burst of yells and oaths, as the infuriated crowd surged closer to the door, and hurled missiles — lighted torches among them — through the broken window.

The soldiers had seen a dark, shaggy head rise above the opening, then a pair of burly shoulders, followed by a hand holding a torch.

"'T is my shot, for I am the senior of all," remarked the soldier Murier, as he raised his piece. "Watch, and see how neatly I will bring him down."

There was a sharp report, a yell, and the intruder disappeared.

"*Parbleu!* But this is rare sport," Murier muttered, feeling for another cartridge. "It is an intelligent enemy we have to fight, who, one at a time, mount a ladder, and hold a torch so that we may see them clearly. I wish —"

The words were cut short by another shot, fired through the window, and he fell to the floor.

"*Sacre!* Now 't is I who am hit. The enemy grows more intelligent."

Some of the hurled-in torches had lit the hall for a moment; but they were quickly extinguished by the baron and Greloire as Lebœuf returned the shot; without effect, however, for this intruder had carried no light, and the hall was again in darkness.

"Art badly hurt, Murier?" whispered Greloire, as he felt the wounded man crawling past him.

"Not but that I can still use my musket, though 't will have to be sitting. But have a care, all of you, and do not step backward too quickly, or you may tread upon me."

"Sh-h!" whispered the baron. "It is best to keep silence. I regret, my man, that you are hurt."

Murier did not reply, for he, as well as the others, was now straining his ears in the attempt to catch the meaning of a silence that had come over the rabble outside.

They were soon informed; for, from the loud-toned directions being given, they knew that the besiegers were endeavoring to join some of the shorter ladders, to be placed side by side, so that several men might ascend at once.

"A plague on whatever gardener it was who left so many ladders about!" muttered the baron.

A moment later the discharge of musketry outside told that the lieutenant and his men had come upon the scene. Then the air was rent by more yells and imprecations, but with a sound in them bespeaking dismay on the part of the surprised marauders.

A second volley rang out, and the officer's voice was heard.

"Steady, my men. Load and fire at will, or club your muskets. Teach these people a lesson — one in the name of the Assembly."

Those in the hall now saw a flaming torch thrust through the window. It was held by Tomas Fauchel, who waved it wildly as he shouted, "Show thyself, thou craven baron, for neither man nor devil shall force me

from this place until I have kept my oath, and killed thee!"

The light of his torch fell upon the uplifted face — white and stern — of the baron, who said, laying his hand upon the musket with which Lebœuf was taking aim at the half-crazed fanatic, "Do him no harm, but let him live."

Fauchel, who had heard the words, answered them with a mocking laugh, and quickly extending his other hand, pulled the trigger of a pistol, as he tossed his torch into the hall and yelled, "Die, thou damnable Papist, and take to hell with thee no thanks of mine for sparing my life."

The baron reeled, for he was struck fairly in the forehead. But he was caught by Lebœuf, and his dead form was not laid upon the floor before Greloire had planted a musket-ball in Fauchel's head, and tumbled him from the ladder — dead as the man he had assassinated.

His followers, terrified by the lieutenant's unexpected attack, were now flying like scared sheep; and the fight was ended.

Old Tatro had a bandage around his head, where a stone had cut the scalp. The officer's coat-sleeve was blood-stained, over the place wounded slightly by a glancing pike-thrust. Besides Murier, another of his soldiers was injured; and one of them had been killed outright.

An hour later the silence that wrapped the château would have repelled the thought of such an uproar having raged within it so recently. But the odor of burned powder tainted the air, and was stronger within doors, where, upon the floor of the hall, stains of blood were visible, despite the efforts of Tatro to remove them; and the polished wainscoting was blistered in places from the flames of torches thrown through the window.

The dead had been laid in upper rooms, and Margot had gone to her own part of the house, leaving Jean in the drawing-room with the lieutenant, who was now walking up and down, and now sitting on the divan,

beside the passionately grieving boy, to whom he spoke words of tenderest sympathy, stroking the dark hair, or holding the burning hands in a cool clasp that was infinitely soothing.

But he left the room several times in order to look after the two wounded men, for whom Tatro and one of the soldiers were caring with patient devotion, while now and again the old man's tears would flow at the thought of his dead master, in whose defence these brave fellows had been wounded.

Some of the soldiers took turns at mounting guard in the lower hall, for fear of a possible renewal of the attack. But the peasants' outburst was evidently spent, for the present, at least, as nothing happened to disturb the silence of the succeeding hours.

The lieutenant also was on the alert; and it was not until the first showing of dawn began to light the earth that, with a last compassionate look at Jean, now slumbering upon the divan, he turned away, to throw himself down for a few hours' sleep.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE gray was flushing with rose tints from the coming sun when a loud knocking upon the entrance door aroused the soldier on guard in the hall, who, seated underneath the broken window where the fruit-ladder (brought inside for greater precaution) now rested, was nodding drowsily.

"Open the door!" a voice shouted peremptorily.

"Not until I know your name and errand," was the soldier's curt response, as he rose slowly, and drew closer to the door. "Who are you, and what is your business here?"

There was a muttering outside, followed by a more vigorous pounding; and the visitor called loudly, "Tatro! Pierre! A thousand devils! You fools inside there, open the door, I say!"

The disturbance brought Greloire from his improvised couch at the rear of the hall; and climbing the ladder, he pushed his head through the broken window for a sight of who might be outside.

"Who are you?" demanded the young man standing before the door, his voice indicating surprise as he looked at the face of the soldier above him.

"That is what I should like to have you tell me of yourself, m'sieur," answered Greloire, in his usual dry manner, his not over friendly eyes noting the details of the attire worn by the aristocratically clad visitor.

"*Dame!*" now exclaimed the latter, evidently more angry than before. "What business can it be of yours? Who are you, that dare cavil over opening to me the door of my father's house? Do it at once, I say, or it will be the worse for you!"

Greloire drew in his head and looked down at his comrade, who was already slipping the bars of the door.

"He said it was his father's house; it must then be right to open the door to him," said the soldier below, glancing inquiringly at Greloire, who was now descending the ladder.

"Right or not, he is but one; and there are two of us to handle such a cocksparrow as I could easily overcome alone, with one hand," replied Greloire scornfully, as the bars fell, and Étienne entered, somewhat paler than usual, and his hair and raiment dishevelled from an all-night's concealment in one of the outbuildings of the château.

Wishing to see the baron, in order to press his demand for more funds, the young man had, unannounced, come down from Paris, and chanced to arrive the evening before, during the wildest part of the *mêlée*.

He was by this time accustomed to such outbreaks; and suspecting quickly the position of affairs, had lost no time in finding a hiding-place in a grove, not far from the house. Here he remained until the mob had dispersed, when, with wonted precaution, he decided to seek concealment in one of the many outbuildings, until daylight should give him courage to face what might be within.

But it did not suit the young man's purposes to let any of this be known. And he left it to be inferred that this was his first appearance upon the scene, while demanding haughtily from the soldiers an explanation of their presence in his father's house, of the ladder in the hall, and of the broken window.

The one who had opened the door was now replacing the bar, and made no reply. He was a burly fellow, with stolid face and manner. But Greloire, who was of better birth, and had considerable polish, explained to the insolent son of the house what had occurred during the previous night.

At the tidings of his father's death, a new expression came to Étienne's face, softening its coldness; but this

quickly changed when, in reply to his query as to who was in command of the escort, Greloire answered, "Lieutenant Bonaparte."

An oath that made both soldiers stare burst from the young man's lips.

"I will go to my apartments," he added, with a return of all his haughtiness; "and do both of you see to it that I am not disturbed by your officer."

With this he stalked through the hall, and up the stairway, shuddering as he passed the blood-stains upon the floor.

"*Peste* — the cur!" muttered the burly soldier, as he and Greloire stood looking at the slim legs now disappearing at the top of the stairs.

Greloire laughed softly. "'Tis but a fair sample of the men and manners that have unchained the fury of France," was his comment; after which he went to the drawing-room and reported the arrival to his officer.

Étienne's steps on the upper stairs and along the oaken-floored hall brought Tatro to the door of the room where lay the two wounded soldiers, one of whom was evidently dying, while the other was sleeping quietly.

"Ah, Monsieur Étienne, is it you, sir?" Then, correcting himself with "Pardon — Monsieur le Baron," he burst forth in a quavering voice, "It is surely a sad return for you."

Somewhat softened by the old man's words, and now realizing more fully the horrors of the night before, Étienne replied in an unusually kind fashion. But when he ended by ordering that a repast be brought to his rooms, Tatro's face showed a surprise he dared not voice; for he wondered that his new master could think of sustenance for himself, so soon after coming upon the scene of his recent loss.

Étienne, noticing this, smiled as he said, "One grows hardened in these days, old man; and had you seen as much blood-spilling as have I during the last three

months, you would learn how to keep your appetite, especially had you fasted for four and twenty hours."

"Pardon, Monsieur le Baron," replied Tatro, looking dazed; "I was only —"

"Send me food and wine at once," interrupted Étienne, turning to go.

"Pardon, Monsieur le Baron," repeated Tatro. "It shall be done as speedily as possible; but there is no servant left in the château excepting Margot and myself. They all fled last night, at the first alarm. But I will tell Margot to bring you what you wish, Monsieur — le Baron."

He hesitated, and seemed to choke, as he applied the title to his new master.

"Old Margot!" exclaimed Étienne, whirling about. "*Dame* — no! Do not send that old woman to me, for her very looks would poison the food!"

"But, Monsieur le Baron," remonstrated Tatro, "I dare not venture to leave these wounded men for so long a time, as they are in my charge until a soldier shall come to relieve me. When I heard your footsteps on the stair I thought the one was coming who should be here. I dare not leave until he comes; and yet I was wondering if it were not my duty to go down and tell the officer that one of his men is surely dying."

Étienne swore under his breath.

"Who is your master here?" he demanded; "that Corsican cur downstairs, or myself? I tell you to prepare the food, and bring it to me, or out of here you go within the half-hour." And he strode away to his own apartments.

A righteous wrath dried the tears in old Tatro's eyes as he turned again to his charges. One was sleeping; it was Murier, who had not been disturbed by the recent colloquy, which, until Étienne's final threat, had been conducted in low tones.

Going to the other bed, Tatro looked at the ghastly face on the pillow, and listened to the strained, irregular breath-

ing, broken now and then by a faint rattle that announced the approach of death.

"Poor lad — poor lad! The Holy Mother bring forgiveness for such sins as you go burdened with! Ah, 't is a dreadful day, this, with people dying, and all the priests fled for their lives, so that none can be found to assail us."

He crossed himself as Margot entered the room; and leaving her to take his place, the old man went below, to acquaint the lieutenant of his soldier's condition, and then to prepare, as best he might, with the help of some of the other soldiers, a morning meal for the household.

Going up later with the food Étienne had ordered, he noticed that the door was ajar of the room where lay the body of his dead master; and an impulse led him to look within.

But he drew back hastily, and went noiselessly on his way, while his face lost the hardness which had gathered there with each step that brought him nearer to the new baron.

The faithful old servant had seen Étienne upon his knees, beside the bed where lay his father.

"It may be that he is not so hard of heart as it seemed," he muttered, placing the tray of food upon a table in one of the luxuriously furnished rooms always reserved for the elder son's use.

"Not so hard," he repeated; "which will be all the better for poor little M'sieur Jean."

The soldier was now dead, and Jean stood at his bedside, close to the lieutenant, who with saddened eyes, laid a hand upon the man's cold forehead as he said softly, "May you rest in peace, poor Jean!"

"Was his name Jean?" whispered the lad, looking with awe at the wide-open eyes and fallen jaw. His veins were freed from the fire and excitement of the night before, and he was only a boy, shrinking with fear in the presence of unfamiliar death.

"Was his name the same as mine?" he asked again, now raising his eyes, heavy and dark-circled, to the face of him he loved and trusted.

The lieutenant started, as if aroused from abstraction; and his arm went about the boy.

"Yes; his name was Jean; and he was a brave soldier. He came from Provençal; so he was a neighbor of yours. He has a poor old widowed mother there, who will carry a broken heart; for he was all she had, and he was a good son to her."

"He leaves more than I have," said Jean, a catching sob breaking his voice; "for you know my mother died when I was a baby."

"Yes; so you told me. And you remember nothing of her?"

The lieutenant spoke as if seeking to divert the channel of grief from the boy's more recent loss.

"No. Yet I have always seemed to know what she was like, for Margot talked to me often of her; and so has my — father."

His voice broke and he was silent, with drooping head and heaving breast, trying to subdue another outburst of sorrow.

The lieutenant drew him still closer. "I, too, have a mother; and all I can ever be that is good and great I shall owe to her teachings."

The marked change in his tone aroused Jean into looking at him. Then one of his arms stole up around the shoulder against which he laid his head.

"If she is like thee — this mother, I should love her as my own."

The only reply to this was one of those magnetic smiles which came so rarely to the pale face; and the young man bent and touched his lips to the boy's brow.

Murier's eyes were now open, and he was looking in a half-dazed way at the two — man and boy — standing on the opposite side of the room. Then, as the lieutenant

moved toward him, he raised his hand and saluted, while his expression became more comprehending.

"We made a brave stand, Murier," said the lieutenant, who now stood by the bed, smiling down at the wounded man.

A faint wave of color showed in the latter's face, and a gratified light in his eyes.

"And were you also hurt, *mon officier*?" he inquired, looking at the arm for which Margot had made a sling.

"Merely a scratch, not worth telling about, although the good dame Margot has made much of it," was the careless answer. "But never mind about such things now," the young man added, with a meaning glance, which Murier understood; for his eyes wandered pityingly to the grief-stricken face of the boy, who stood near, looking at him intently.

Here Margot came in; and the lieutenant, drawing her aside, gave some low-toned directions, to which she listened respectfully, glancing meanwhile at Jean. The lad had gone to the door, as if to leave the room; but he now stood waiting for his friend, of whom Margot was beginning to feel somewhat jealous.

She had slept little during the night, but lay thinking of what changes were likely to come, now that the baron was dead. Their last interview, and the secret he had then imparted, together with the injunction he laid upon her respecting Jean's future, moved the good woman very strongly.

Now that Étienne was the head of the house, she dreaded — she knew not exactly what. But an intuition warned her to secure the money and valuables which the baron had intrusted to her care; to take them from their present hiding-place, and have them at hand, in case some additional disaster should come. And, too, bearing in mind her master's command that she remove Jean from Étienne's rule in case of that befalling which now had come to pass, her perplexed brain had at length evolved a plan which seemed both wise and feasible.

But, before attempting to put it into execution, a curious impulse urged her to take the young officer into her confidence. His unconcealed love for her nursling, and Jean's reciprocal affection, inspired her to trust him. But, with a peasant's caution, she was still weighing the matter in her mind, almost fearing to follow her impulse, yet feeling the need of assurance from a stronger and wiser head than she could assume her own to be.

These considerations were occupying her thoughts while listening to the lieutenant's directions that the dead soldier be taken from the room by some of his comrades, and removed to the apartment where lay the other one; and that this be done at once, without letting the wounded man know more of the matter than was necessary.

Her resolution was now taken; and looking up into the cold, clean-cut face before her, she asked, "You will not leave here to-day, monsieur?"

"Perhaps; I cannot decide until later."

"Before you go, monsieur, I would take it as a great favor should you let me ask of you some advice as to a matter concerning him you seem to love." And she glanced again at Jean, who was still standing in the doorway, with his back to them.

The officer, if he felt any surprise, showed none, for he answered her with kindly assurance. He then joined Jean, and the two went below, where breakfast awaited them.

CHAPTER SIX

THE bodies of Fauchel and his followers, left behind by the fleeing mob, had, during the night, been dragged forth by the soldiers, and laid upon one of the lower terraces, some distance from the house; for it was believed that the friends of the dead would return to seek for them. And the surmise was correct; for when the sun rose, the terrace presented its usual appearance.

The two dead soldiers were buried early in the afternoon; but the stars were coming out when the door of the great vault was closed, and the late baron left to sleep with his ancestors.

Étienne, silent and repelling, stood by, vouchsafing little notice of any one about him. Jean had taken care to keep away from his half-brother; and the latter replied with scant courtesy to the lieutenant's salutation, when they met for the first time, as the baron's body was borne from the house.

But the young officer had found an opportunity for a long talk with Margot; and being now fully informed as to the new baron's character, as well as of his probable refusal to permit Margot to carry out his father's commands concerning Jean, he was fully determined to defend the interests of the boy, who was now more than ever dear to him, and sustain Margot in performing a duty which would insure her charge being safe from Étienne's tyranny.

Margot was not of those who had stood about the tomb. Étienne's temporary absence from the house being assured, she had improved the opportunity to open

the secret panel and remove the metal box and bags of coin, which she hid away amongst her own belongings. This done, she made a bowl of nourishing broth, and took it to Murier, who, by another day, would be able to sit his horse and start on his return to Paris.

Her own course of action was—strengthened by the lieutenant's counsel and aid—already arranged. She proposed, with Jean and Pierre, to seek a new home in Toulon, where a large number of Royalists, together with others who had suffered persecution from the Revolutionists, had found refuge.

To that city had fled, some months before, Père Huot, for many years a member of the baron's household, his adviser and confessor, and Jean's instructor. Religion, like many other good things, was fast being discarded in France; and the monasteries having been broken up, the good priest had, as ordered by his superior, gone to Toulon.

Margot determined to seek him there, hoping that Étienne, hating as he did his half-brother, would place no obstacle in the way of getting quit of him. And even should he seek to assert his authority, and refuse to let her carry out her plan, she now felt herself in a position to defy him, armed as she was with his father's instructions, and supported, as she knew she would be, by Jean's military friend, whose consideration for his soldiers, and their enthusiastic praise of him, had banished from her mind the last doubt of his wisdom and sincerity.

He had promised to tarry until after the next morning's meal, when Étienne should have been informed of his father's action in confiding to Margot the future of his younger son, and of her intention to leave immediately for Toulon.

But, late that evening, something occurred which made all such explanations unnecessary.

One of the soldiers was keeping guard in the hall,

although there was little fear of another attack, as the peasants, lacking Fauchel's fanatical haranguing to arouse their sluggish passions, were not likely to rally again, especially after the severe punishment dealt out to them the night before.

Greloire was shut up in the room with his wounded comrade Murier; Tatro had gone to seek a much needed rest; and Margot hovered about, upstairs and below, in readiness for any case of need.

Presently she saw Étienne enter the drawing-room, where Jean had remained, having refused to leave the lieutenant, who was now seated at a table, examining some papers found upon the dead Fauchel; and considering this an opportune time to make known her plans, she had turned toward the door, when Étienne's voice, full of its old-time arrogance, came to her.

"Jean, leave the room instantly, and go to your bed!"

Margot paused in the doorway and saw Jean's head raised with a belligerent poise. He was seated in front of Étienne, who stood with his back to Margot; but, while the boy's eyes blazed with anger, he was silent.

"Do you not hear me? Go at once, as I have ordered!" commanded Étienne, as if speaking to one of his dogs.

The lieutenant had laid aside the paper he was perusing, and a frown gathered over his eyes as he looked at the speaker.

"I will not go for you, Étienne, when you order me in such a rude fashion," Jean now said, his voice shaking with rage.

Uttering a vile oath, Étienne strode forward, and seizing him by the collar, dragged the boy from the chair and began striking him.

"Monsieur Étienne, do not you do that!" cried Margot, rushing toward him. "Ah, *mon Dieu!* How can you have the heart, and at such a time as this?"

Jean was struggling in a wild fury, using feet and hands to defend himself, which he did in a way that brought to

the lieutenant's mind the scene of two years before, in the Tuileries garden.

He had risen at Margot's cry, and was standing close to Étienne, who had, thus far, paid no attention to him.

"Hold, Monsieur le Baron," he said, distinctly and calmly. "I have the right to tell you that you cannot thus assert your authority in my presence."

Étienne, as once before, released Jean, and turned to face the speaker, to whom the boy now rushed, clinging to him with a storm of passionate sobs, coming partly from anger, and partly from a bruised heart.

The arm which would shield him went quickly around his neck and shaking shoulders, as the lieutenant continued, in the same quiet tone, and looking into Étienne's blazing eyes as the young man stood with clenched hands, biting his thin under lip, "I have to tell you, monsieur, that your father, the late baron, has intrusted to this good woman the sole care of your brother; and that I, as her helper and adviser, will champion his rights, no matter from what quarter they may be assailed."

Margot had drawn nearer to his side; and, as Jean's sobs ceased, the three confronted Étienne, who now burst into a loud, derisive laugh.

"Indeed," he said, with a malicious sneer. "A charming trio of friends, truly devoted to one another's interests! So be it. But you will admit that this is my estate, and that I have the privilege of its harboring only such guests as it suits me to entertain. I now tell you that it is not my pleasure to entertain such as stand before me; and I request that you all leave the château at once."

"Monsieur Étienne — Monsieur le Baron!" exclaimed Margot. "Surely you will never do such a cruel thing as to turn us out at this hour, and with affairs in the village as they are, so that we dare not trust ourselves at the inn!"

"What can a bastard, and the friends and champions of a bastard, expect better?" he demanded, now speaking deliberately, his pale face distorted by malice.

Margot started indignantly, an angry flame springing into her eyes; and the lieutenant said in a low tone, whose very calmness was a menace, "It is scarcely the act of a gentleman to insult the defenceless and the dead."

"Insult!" cried Étienne, now letting loose all the vials of his hatred and malignity. "*Peste!* How can he be other than I have called him, when his mother was no wife?"

At this Jean stood erect, and with flashing eyes stepped closer to his tormentor, who, now facing Margot more directly, went on in the same furious way, "It is to be supposed you never happened to know that when you and your low-born mistress, the daughter of a snivelling sneak of a Huguenot preacher, bedevilled my father into a marriage ceremony, he already had a wife living—my own mother!"

"'Tis false!" declared Margot, forgetting everything like habitual respect.

"It is not," Étienne retorted; "and you are a liar when you say otherwise."

Jean, with paling face, his burning eyes fastened upon his brother, seemed stunned. The lieutenant stood, calm and cold, to all outward appearance; but the fingers resting upon the back of a chair took a tight grip of the heavy carving, and in his eyes was a glitter as of an unsheathed steel blade.

"It is not," Étienne repeated less vehemently, "as Père Huot could tell you, if you asked him. My mother, the late baronne, died but three years ago, in, I regret to say, a madhouse, at Paris. But mad, or sane, she was the baronne; and that other woman, the mother of your young whelp there, was no wife of my father's, as you must now admit. The church would never recognize her as his wife, he being a true Catholic, and no priest performing the marriage ceremony between him and that cursed Huguenot—"

Étienne uttered an epithet too vile for repetition—an epithet that stung to madness the listening boy, who, with

a cry of rage, such as might come from a new Cain wakened to life, snatched a dagger from the bric-à-brac strewn upon a near-by table, and springing upon Étienne drove the rusted blade into his side.

The slight form reeled and fell, a crumpled heap, upon the floor, while Margot, with a shriek that brought the soldier flying from his post in the hall, fell upon her knees, and tried, with her apron, to stanch the flowing blood.

But her thoughts were all for Jean.

"*Mais — mais, mon pauvre bébé !* I fear thou hast done for thyself now."

He had turned to flee ; but an iron grip on his shoulder held him, and, looking up, he fell to trembling and shivering, as he met the stern eyes of his friend, looking as he had never before seen them.

"Where would you go?" inquired a low voice, whose measured calm matched the look of the eyes.

The boy stood silent, with drooped head.

The lieutenant, still holding him fast, moved to where Margot and the soldier were kneeling beside Étienne, and Jean met the wild-eyed regard of the wounded man, from whose white lips now poured a flood of profanity, mingled with threats of vengeance against the boy, whom he ordered to leave the apartment.

The lieutenant turned away with a scornful laugh, half-suppressed, but which Jean heard ; and, taking heart, the lad looked beseechingly upward, as if asking pardon for his mad act.

"Come away — come away, my De Soto," whispered the officer ; and bending he kissed the tear-wet cheek. "He has a venomous nature, truly, and one cannot be greatly blamed for treating a dog as he deserves."

Then, gathering up the papers at which he had been looking, he thrust them into his pocket, and motioned Jean to follow him from the room.

When out in the dimly lighted hall, the boy, looking up, said wistfully, as he laid a hand upon his friend's arm,

"You told me of your love for your mother. Would you care that any one spoke of her as mine was named just now?"

With a strong word — the first Jean had ever heard from his lips — the lieutenant answered, "If he had, he would have been like to pay for it with his blood."

Then, checking himself, he added, in a quieter tone, "Nay, Jean, I do not blame thee so much for the act as for the loss of self-control which prompted it. Take my word that a boy who cannot learn to control his own temper can never hope to be a safe controller of other men and matters, to say nothing of his own, when he comes to man's estate."

Here Margot joined them, on her way to summon Tatro, that he might assist the soldier in getting Étienne to his own apartments; and pausing a moment by Jean, she passed a caressing hand over his dark locks as she murmured, "My jewel — my poor, unhappy Jean! If only thou hadst not done it!" And, before he could reply, she went her way.

Étienne was soon removed to his apartments, which were in a far wing of the château; and then the lieutenant once more entered the drawing-room, telling Margot that he should stop there again for the night. But he insisted upon Jean going to his own chamber, and to bed, as usual.

Early next morning, the household was astir — all save Étienne, who, although his wound proved to be but slight, kept to his bed, with Tatro in attendance; and before noon, all but these two had left the château and set out upon their various routes, — Margot, with Jean and Pierre, for Toulon, in company with the soldier Greloire, sent by the lieutenant to escort them.

At the fork in the highway, where their roads parted, Jean turned in his saddle to look after the slender figure riding away at the head of his men, and sitting his powerful black horse with the same ease and grace with which he seemed to do everything.

Turning his head, as if he felt the boy's longing eyes, the lieutenant smiled, and waved his hand. Then, putting spurs to his horse, he rode swiftly from sight, followed by his soldiers.

The clouds of dust from the animals' hoofs rose in the still noonday air, and floated from the road to the green hedge that bordered it, — floated, settled down, and disappeared.

As the dust, so also was gone the secure, peaceful life of the old days at the château. The boy-heart had outstripped its years. Bloodshed and violence — a first realization of sorrow, that had shattered his idols into the dust — had brought a man's depth of bitter pain.

After a last backward look toward the vacant space that had held the one he loved best on earth, Jean started his horse onward, to overtake the lumbering vehicle, driven by Pierre, and containing Margot and all the travellers' belongings.

Greloire had, that morning, by Margot's direction, purchased the conveyance from a neighbor, Jean's own pony being the only thing she would permit to be taken from her late master's estate.

CHAPTER SEVEN

TOULON, on the Mediterranean, was at this time the great military depot of France. Its inhabitants numbered about twenty-five thousand; and more than fifty frigates and ships of the line rode at anchor in its harbor, while within its spacious magazines was collected an immense quantity of military and naval stores.

Scarcely a day passed during the fall and early winter of 1793 that did not bring to the city families and individuals from all parts of France, seeking protection from the Revolutionists' cruelties — outrages which the Committee were either unable to control, or to which they were indifferent.

The last month of that never-to-be-forgotten year was waning, when Louis, the fallen king, was accorded that mockery of justice called a "trial" before the Convention, which, not daring to murder him outright, sought to hide under a cloak of sophistry and hypocrisy the bloody guilt of its own godless ambitions.

In January, 1793, sentence of death was pronounced, despite letters of remonstrance from England and Spain; and on the morning of the 21st of that month, Louis Capet ascended the scaffold.

Marie Antoinette, insulted and persecuted by brutal gaolers, who sought to degrade her queenliness to their own infamous depths, dragged out her weary days in the Temple, until, months later, came the morning that saw the tumbrel passing slowly through the surging masses crowding the way to the scaffold, bearing the bent form and whitened hair of her, a pitiful semblance of the beautiful Queen of France.

When, at Toulon, the friends of the old monarchy knew of all this, they argued among themselves that the violence

with which their land had been filled was too terrible to be longer endured; and they began to discuss the idea of surrendering the city, its magazines, forts, and ships, to the combined English and Spanish fleets lying outside its harbor, and thus help to bring about a return of law and reason to insane France.

Among those in Toulon who heard of the proposed surrender was one who listened with not a little of misgiving to the talk of it amongst the few neighbors with whom she permitted herself acquaintance.

This was Margot, who, with Jean and Pierre, safe under the humble roof of their new home, had for these many months enjoyed a security she had never before known. In a measure her own mistress, and removed from the dread of Étienne, she found reliance and peace in the kindly guidance of Père Huot, to whom the boys went each day for instruction, his abode being some distance from Margot's small house, which was in a retired part of the city, near the suburbs.

A surrender suggested to her the possibility of bringing scenes of bloodshed and violence; and the very name of "English" was to her—as also to most of her compatriots—the synonym of what was utterly detestable.

Her fears were realized when the surrender was accomplished, and the English ships sailed triumphantly into port, landing five thousand of their own troops and eight thousand Spaniards.

This proceeding was regarded with the greatest alarm and indignation by the Revolutionists, who, considering the surrender an act of treachery, resolved to retake Toulon, and drive the allies from the soil of France.

But this was a thing not easy of accomplishment, with the strong army and navy now holding the city, whose fortresses were almost impregnable, and contained unlimited munitions of war. Two armies were, however, marched by the Revolutionists upon Toulon; and a siege was begun which for three months made but little apparent progress.

Affairs within the city became unsettled, and were soon almost demoralized; and Père Huot having fallen seriously ill, Margot's heart grew heavy, as Jean, seeming to throw off all restraint, wandered day after day about the streets, associating with soldiers and rough characters, whose words and actions in no wise accorded with the teachings of the good priest.

Margot had known many an unhappy hour because of the streak of recklessness which had been growing in Jean since a year ago, when occurred that violent scene under the home roof, and Étienne had so ruthlessly soiled the boy's respect for his dead father. But she had not dared to communicate much of her misgivings from the day, now several weeks past, when, after remonstrating warmly as to some offence he had committed, she bade him ask himself if his father would have approved the act, and started back, as from a man's threatened attack, when the boy turned fiercely upon her.

"Never name him to me again!" he cried, with heaving breast and flashing eyes. "I have no father. Do you know my name here in Toulon? It is the same as Pierre's. He is Pierre Lafitte, and I am his brother, Jean Lafitte. And, be I saint or devil, to the end of my life I am Jean Lafitte!"

He looked so big and terrible in his rage that Margot, silent and frightened, felt that he was almost a stranger to her — this boy she had carried in her arms, and whom she had loved and watched over for so many years.

The tears had gathered in her eyes as she went about her household duties, saying to herself, as if for consolation to her injured feelings, "Poor infant — poor baby mine! The anger is, after all, not for me. What Étienne said rankles now, because he is young. Man's years will soften that; and if he chooses to call himself by my name, surely 't is a name of which he has never known aught that was false or bad. But I would that the man he loves might be with us, for he seemed to have the power to do what he

pleased with the boy. *Tiens!* He was one to love and trust; but who can say when we shall meet him again."

This was to befall sooner than she thought; for Bonaparte, now promoted to be lieutenant-colonel of artillery, had laid before the Convention his views as to the lack of science shown in conducting the siege of Toulon; and that body, after adopting his suggestions, had invested him with the command of the artillery, with instructions to put his own ideas into effect. He was, even now, near the scene of action.

It was the last night of November, when darkness fell early over the city, and Margot was preparing her lonely evening meal. Where Jean and Pierre were, she knew not, but presumed that, as was often their habit, they would sup with some of their soldier acquaintances.

Pierre, now a broad-shouldered, muscular fellow of sixteen, was not wholly lacking in devotion to his mother. But his movements were in a large degree dictated by Jean's wishes or whims, as had ever been the case, despite the former's seniority in years.

Although the evening was cold, the usual number of pedestrians were abroad, these being mostly soldiers, who were not too tired (although a skirmish had called many of them into action during the forenoon) to be seeking excitement and gossip at the various eating and drinking places frequented by them.

One of these was called "*Le Chien Heureux*," a two-story house situated down near one of the quays, and built close against the granite cliff that rose on one side, above its roof, thus protecting it from any shots which might come from the ships in the harbor.

Lights were blinking brightly from its small windows, and inside several stoves were burning, where Thiel, the landlord, and his one assistant, were preparing supper for several civilians and soldiers who sat about, talking and drinking, at the various small tables.

The room was low-ceiled and bare-floored; but it was

made cheery by the blazing fire of logs in a wide stone fireplace near the end opposite to where the host and his servant were busy with their cooking.

Sitting near the fire, two soldiers and a citizen, together with Jean and Pierre, were listening to a man in their midst, who, from his talk and appearance, seemed to have been an extensive traveller. He was heavily built, with a Spanish type of face, whose naturally dark skin was bronzed to an extent that suggested contact with the air of warmer climes. His intensely black hair had the metallic sheen of the Indian's, and a heavy mustache, jetty-hued as his hair, hid the mouth completely, except when he laughed, which was rarely; and then there was a gleam of white teeth which accentuated the sinister expression of his whole face.

This was Laro, an habitu  of Le Chien Heureux when on shore from the "Aigle," a rakish-looking brigantine, of which he was owner and captain.

He was known to all as a trader; and, to an initiated few, it was known also how, through him, the finest tobacco, Jamaica spirits, and other choice products of the West Indies, could be procured at a low price, because of their freedom from duty.

Many were the bales and kegs landed on the quay-head within the past few years for Thiel and his patrons, taken ashore under the very nose of the lookout man, who might well have been suspected of a friendly disposition, and of not caring to see anything which might arouse cause for closer inspection.

The fact was that some of these guards had little scores running with Thiel; and the latter took care to keep these accounts well before their eyes, although never pressing too keenly for payment.

It was in those times somewhat of a struggle for them to live, for the coast-guards, like the soldiers, received but a pittance by way of wages. Yet, although pinched more or less, Thiel's customers could appreciate the merits of fine

tobacco and liquor, sold at moderate prices; and thus it was that their own interests prompted them to avoid seeing or knowing more than might be forced upon them.

Laro had for many months been the cause of strong disapproval and anxiety for Margot, who had heard more of him through Pierre than from Jean; and a spark of anger had set fire to her long worrying over the intimacy she saw no way of breaking up, when one day Laro had come to the cottage in search of Jean. Then later, when she remonstrated with the boy, it was her strong expression of opinion as to his new acquaintance, and her question as to what his father would have said of his keeping company with such a "rough swaggerer," that had caused Jean to turn upon her so angrily.

And as she now looked through the window, out into the growing darkness, Margot suspected truly where the boy was, and with whom, this night.

In the course of his talk of the West Indies and Louisiana, and tales of adventure there, which were the source of Laro's fascination for Jean, and Pierre as well, the captain was now telling of one Lemaire, a pirate of Martinique, who had recently been executed there, having been betrayed by a confederate, and convicted by means of papers found in his possession; and Laro told of the enormous quantity of booty discovered at Lemaire's different plantations, which had been seized by the government.

Jean listened with an attention which, for some reason, appeared to amuse Laro, who, now and then, with a quizzical smile lighting his black eyes, glanced askance at the boy's enraptured face.

The spirit and daring of the handsome lad had made a strong impression upon the man's not very susceptible heart; and this, together with the freedom both of them enjoyed from any ties of kinship with others, had, after a short time, greatly lessened the disparity between their ages.

Laro's story had been listened to by others seated around

the tables, who occasionally reminded Thiel to hurry their suppers; and the air was becoming redolent with an appetizing odor of browning capons, when a rattling at the door announced a new arrival.

The next minute a soldierly-looking man came in, the uniform of a petty officer showing as he unclasped and threw off the heavy cloak that had enveloped him.

Jean's back was to the door, and he was too much absorbed with his own thoughts, or with the tale he had just been hearing, to even look around. Laro, however, glanced at the new-comer, as did the others about; but evidently seeing nothing amiss in his appearance, they paid no further attention to him.

He took as little notice of them, and, after demanding supper as speedily as possible, seated himself some distance away from the group at the fire.

But Pierre had been staring open-mouthed at him; and now the sound of his voice caused Jean to start, and turn his head quickly in the direction of the shadowy corner where the soldier was seated.

The latter had noticed Pierre, and addressing him, demanded in rather a menacing tone, "What are you staring at, boy? Surely a soldier is no strange thing in Toulon, for the sight of one to make your eyes pop out of your head."

Pierre, cautious by nature, had learned the art of being still more so; and there was no lack of quick wit in the fellow, for all his stolid quiet, which often passed for stupidity.

He made no reply to the soldier's inquiry, and turned his eyes to the fire. But Jean, springing to his feet, exclaimed, "If your looks match your speech and manners, you must be cause for any decent man's —"

His voice died away as his eyes rested on the soldier's face.

"Grelloire!" he breathed, surprise chasing all the anger from his voice.

"Any decent man's — Greloire!" repeated the other with a laugh. "What is that, my cocksparrow? Toulon harbors many a stranger tongue, to be sure, but I speak only my own."

"Which does not seem to be a very civil one," interposed Laro, scowling, and ready to take the part of his favorite.

But this comment in no wise affected the laughing manner of the stranger, who, still looking at Jean, vouchsafed the captain no notice whatever.

"Come, gentlemen, all," said Thiel, now bustling amongst them with a huge platter. "Your suppers are ready; and 't is surely wiser to eat than to quarrel. With all the fighting that fills the time hereabouts, and is likely to for many a day to come, 't is a pity if our nights cannot be free from discord."

The steaming viands, now filling the tables, and the replenished drinking-jugs helped to bring about, in appearance at least, the peace stipulated for by the host; and neither Laro nor the others paid any further heed to the soldier, who, seated apart from them, ate his supper with an appetite that bore witness to previous fasting. But at odd moments, when unnoticed, his eyes, with a smiling warning in them, met those of the two boys; and once, while Jean was staring at him, he laid a finger upon his lips with a swift cautioning gesture of silence.

CHAPTER EIGHT

HIS supper finished, Jean strolled back to the fire, before which Greloire had seated himself, while the others remained at the tables, some still eating, and all of them discussing matters pertaining to the siege.

Leaning carelessly against the fireplace, after a quick glance about, to make sure he was not observed, the boy looked at the soldier with a world of inquiry in his dark eyes. Greloire replied with a comprehending smile, but again laid his finger against his lips, as if impressing silence, and then turned to the fire.

Presently he stretched himself lazily, and remarked to Thiel, who was passing, "A cosey retreat, this of yours, landlord. Yet it will be rather of a wonder if a cannon-ball does not spoil its cover when our friends outside get into the city so far as to draw the fire from the ships just over the cliffs there, in the harbor."

"'Twill be time enough to think about that when the Revolutionists get into the city," retorted Thiel, with marked sarcasm, while several of those about the tables paused in their talk, and turned to look at the soldier, whose back was toward them.

"Monsieur seems to speak as if he thought the enemy were to be victorious."

Laro said this, and his tone was not pleasant.

"*Ma foi*, — not I," responded Greloire, lazily turning his handsome, indolent face to meet the eyes of those seated behind him.

"It is money in my purse just now," he added, "so long as our Revolutionary friends are kept howling outside."

With this he arose, turned his back to the fire, and squarely faced the others, looking down upon them from his six feet of stalwart manhood, while his blue eyes, like his clean-shaven, well-cut lips, seemed to smile mockingly.

For a second Laro stared at him. Then, as if having decided upon what action to take, he laughed good-naturedly and said, "Draw up, brother, and join us in drinking confusion to those outside our walls. This will wash away all former lack of hospitality."

"I have no complaint to make as to lack of hospitality," Greloire answered carelessly, a smile dulling the point of what might have been construed as a rude refusal. "A soldier has to take matters as they come, and soon gets accustomed to plain manners. But I must be excused from joining you, comrades, as I have already had enough to drink, and it is nearing the time when I must report for duty."

He had picked up his long cloak, and was putting it on, while Laro had risen and was returning to his former seat before the fire. And neither the latter nor the others noticed the suggestive motion of the speaker's head and hand, as, with slightly arched eyebrows, he looked once more toward Jean, who was still standing beside the fireplace. But the boy was quick to see these, and understood that he might expect to find Greloire outside.

Allowing what he felt to be a proper amount of time to pass after the latter had closed the door behind him, Jean put on his cap, and having motioned to Pierre, they both followed, regardless of Laro's declaration that it was earlier than usual, and not yet time for them to start for home.

"Wild as a sea gull is my young mate," said the captain laughingly, as the door closed after them, and he was filling his pipe; "one who will ever have his own mighty way. *Madre de Dios!* But he has the making of a fine one for the business."

"What business?" inquired one of the civilians; whereat several of the others laughed.

"Sea-faring business," was Laro's imperturbable reply, while the flame with which he was lighting his pipe made a dancing gleam over his face, and glinted for an instant in his cruel eyes. "Sea-faring, of course; he is just the one for my first mate, granting he has a few more years, and the knowledge to handle a ship. But time will bring these; and as for his nature, time cannot improve upon it."

He ended meditatively, as he beat out the flame of the taper.

"The lad must be a young hell-cat to call forth such words from you," asserted a soldier at one of the tables; but to this Laro made no reply.

The wind was rising outside, and its fitful gusts came and died away sobbingly, as if spirit voices might be lamenting over the woeful passions of men, which had filled the city with suffering bodies and torn hearts. Tomorrow was sure to bring again, as for so many days past the wild attack and fierce defence, the mangled forms of brave men, the wounded, on stretchers, borne from the line of fire to the shelter of the hospitals, or to where heavy-hearted ones, waiting in tears, received the realization of their forebodings.

When Jean and Pierre reached the street, the former looked around him, and then laid a hand on his companion's arm as he whispered, "We must walk slowly, and keep a sharp lookout. Greloire is about, and wishes to see the way we take, for he has something to tell us."

"How dost know that?" asked Pierre, in a low tone. "Hark," he added quickly, crossing himself; "hear that dog howling."

"*Mais!*" replied Jean contemptuously, "what is a dog's howling? If there were any sense in what you think, all the dogs in Toulon have good cause to howl day and night."

"Why should he not wish to have it known that we had met him before?" asked Pierre, as they walked slowly along.

"I know not; but I am glad of the chance to see Greloire, for he may tell me of *him*," answered Jean.

Pierre, knowing who was meant, said nothing more; and the two boys, with occasional sharp glances around, passed along the almost deserted street, the sullen roaring of the sea, as it dashed against the cliffs, dying away behind them as they moved farther from the neighborhood of Le Chien Heureux.

Presently Pierre, after a quick look over his shoulder, gripped Jean's arm.

"There is a man who looks like Greloire coming on just behind us."

"No doubt it is he," said Jean, without turning his head. "Whatever ails thine eyes, that thou didst not see him standing in the shadow of that doorway we passed a moment since?"

"Then why not have stopped and spoken, if you saw him?"

"*Peste!*" was Jean's impatient rejoinder. "Thou hadst better sharpen thy wits, else thou art likely to come to grief. Greloire would not have acted as he did unless there be something afloat. What it is, he knows, and we do not; and by letting him speak first we shall be all the more certain not to run his head, nor our own, into danger."

He had scarcely spoken when a swift but cautious foot-fall came close behind him, and a hand caught his shoulder, while Greloire said in a carefully lowered voice, "*Tiens!* My quick-witted comrade, how are you?"

"As you see, or might, were it not so dark," replied Jean, grasping the soldier's hand. "And you?"

"Much better for the fine supper I have been eating," said Greloire, a note of laughter in his voice.

Pierre now fell behind, and the three stepped more briskly.

"What have you to tell me?" inquired Jean, after they had gone a few paces, and Greloire remained silent.

"Much or little, as you happen to take it. I have been

here in this cursed place, and about it, for almost a month; but it was only a week ago that I had a chance to go to the inn where I left all of you last year, and where now I found only strangers, who were able, however, to direct me to Père Huot's house. But the good father was ill, so that I could not see him; and all the information I could obtain was that you were living somewhere in the city."

"Did your lieutenant send you,—was he wishing to know of me?" asked Jean eagerly. But there was no answer.

"Did he send you to find out about me?" The question came now with manifest impatience.

"Well, yes, and no," replied Greloire, speaking slowly, as if considering his words, and adding, as he looked down into the boy's upraised face, which even the dim light of the stars showed to be filled with keen disappointment, "Surely you have every reason to know his love for you; and he is one who never forgets. But his days are now filled with that which leaves little time for him to think of anything but this siege."

"What mean you?" asked Jean, surprise showing in his tone. "What has he to do with the siege?"

Greloire laughed softly. "I mean that he is now a lieutenant-colonel, and in charge of the artillery which is knocking to pieces this little city of yours."

"But," said Jean, with increasing astonishment, "I heard that General Dugommier was in command of the troops outside."

"So he is—in name. But it is our little colonel who says what is to be done, and Dugommier does it; for such are the orders of the Convention."

"Then he is here!" said the boy, who had listened with fast-growing wonder.

"He is outside the city, with the Revolutionary forces," answered Greloire, in a tone still lower than he had been using.

"He without, and you within, fighting against him!" burst from Jean's lips, as he drew himself away.

"Sh-h!" whispered the soldier. "These streets may seem deserted; but 't is as well not to speak loud words for the winds to carry where the wrong ears may hear them."

Jean laughed softly, and came closer to Greloire.

"Aha — I see how it is."

"Be all the more careful, then, my young master," warned the soldier. "Can I trust you?"

"As yourself," replied the lad soberly. "And" — with a movement of his hand toward Pierre, who was behind them — "what I am, so is he."

"I will believe you; for you have the body of a boy, with the spirit and wit of a man grown."

But Jean, not heeding the compliment, asked, "You have ways of going back and forth between him and the city?"

"Yes; but they are difficult and dangerous ones."

"Then," added the boy, hardly waiting for Greloire to finish, "if you can go to him, why may not I do the same?"

The soldier appeared surprised, and a strong word came from his lips. But it was succeeded by a laugh as he said, "No — no; not now, not yet. Perhaps, a little later; but" — now soberly — "it might be your death were you to attempt such a thing now."

"*Peste!*" exclaimed Jean scornfully. "I am no girl, to be afraid of bullets. Pierre and I have already done some fighting, along with the soldiers, up in one of the forts. But" — laughingly — "do not tell Margot of this, should you see her."

"Poor dame Margot," said Greloire. "She must surely have a handful to manage you. And so you have been fighting! How is this, when you were ready to fly at my throat a minute ago, because you thought I was doing the same thing."

"That was before I knew how it was with you," Jean explained. "But now that I know he is outside the city, I would sooner shoot myself than send a bullet flying where it might hurt him."

"So would I, or any of his men. As you love him, so do we all. Myself, this night, — I would lie down and die, if it should be his wish, or if I thought I could better serve him dead than living."

There was silence for a time, while the three walked slowly along until they reached a street where the houses were far apart; and the last one of all, from whose windows came a faint gleam of light, Jean pointed out to Greloire as his present abode.

"And so that is where you are living," said the soldier, as they stood looking toward it. "I tell you, lad, that had I the chance to possess so quiet a home, I should stop within it, and not be wandering into such shambles of carnage and blood as is the city now."

Jean paid no attention to what might have been taken as a criticism upon his having been where Greloire found him a short while before, but asked longingly, "If I may not see him now, Greloire, when think you it will be safer?"

"I will get word to him that I have found you, and of your wish to see him," was the reply, as the speaker laid a hand on the boy's arm. "Then, when a certain time comes, some one has to go to him with reports. Do you understand?"

His lips were now almost against Jean's ear, and he emphasized his words by a tighter hold upon the lad's arm.

Jean nodded, and Greloire continued, "If I can arrange it, and he will permit, I will send you to him with the reports."

"Yes," said the boy, as the other paused. "What else?"

"This," replied Greloire, with an earnestness made more impressive by his lowered voice: "Take my advice,

and keep away from Le Chien Heureux. I can now come to your house; and that will be the best place for me to see you. But, if you are to undertake the mission of which I spoke, the less you see of that scoundrel Laro, the better will it be."

"Laro is my friend," declared Jean, his quick temper rising like a flash of fire. "He is my friend, and even you must not name him in such fashion to me."

"So?" said Greloire calmly, taking his hand from the boy's arm. "Then I doubt if you are to be trusted, and regret telling you as much as I have."

"Why do you?" demanded Jean, still more angrily. "Why is Laro concerned in the matter?"

"Because," replied Greloire, in no wise disturbed, "he is, as I suspect, a Spaniard, and would naturally side with his countrymen. And, too, I well know his reputation, which is one our colonel would not approve."

"I should tell Laro nothing," said Jean. "How dare you think I would be guilty of such false dealing?"

"Nay, nay," the soldier answered, replacing his hand upon Jean's arm. "I do not mean to imply that you would be treacherous; for I know you too well. I mean that Laro is not to be trusted. He is almost old enough to be your father; and, his suspicions once aroused, he has sufficient craftiness to surprise your secret, and use it for our harm."

Jean was silent, and Greloire went on in a milder tone, "You would surely wish to be a man such as our little colonel would have you, and to whom he would give his friendship?"

"How can you ask?" All anger was gone from the boy's voice, and he pressed the hand resting upon his arm.

"He has himself told me that a man's character was to be known by those of the men he chooses for comrades. Laro is one with whom I know he would have no intimacy. I saw you eating and drinking with Laro this

night, and could not but observe the pleasure you found in his company. Now tell me, were you in my place would you not think twice before risking secrets with such a keeper — one who cares so much for Laro as to have temper with an older friend, who, knowing the man's reputation, warns you against him?"

"I am not angry, Greloire," declared Jean penitently, "and regret that I was so. Pardon me."

"All right — all right, *mon ami*," was Greloire's hearty reply. Then, again lowering his voice, he asked in a half quizzical tone, "And do you still wish to see our little colonel?"

"Yes — indeed yes! You know that I would not give one of his fingers in exchange for a dozen Laros."

"Even such an exchange would be unjust to him we both love," was the soldier's terse comment. "Then you will keep away from Laro as much as possible, until I can see you again?"

"Yes. And will you come soon?"

"As soon as may be; but just how soon I cannot say. Remember that I have left a grave secret in your keeping, and trust you to guard it sacredly."

"That will I do, you may depend," answered Jean with intense earnestness.

"*Bien*," said Greloire. "Now I must be going. So adieu, and my compliments to the good dame Margot."

With this he turned about, and whistling softly, went back the way they had come, while the two boys, after watching him a few moments, bent their steps toward the cottage.

CHAPTER NINE

DURING the next three or four days Margot was made happy, and troubled as well, by the unusual domesticity of the two boys, more especially Jean. Pierre took occasional brief trips from home, but Jean went not at all, although his impatience and restlessness drove Margot almost into wishing that he might go abroad; for by the beginning of the fourth day she was at her wit's end to decide what new mood had taken possession of him.

After she had overheard him telling Pierre to say that he was sick, when the older boy had reported that Laro was asking for him, the good woman made a huge dose of tisane, and with tears in her eyes begged Jean to drink it; for tisane she knew was excellent for a cold, which she supposed was what must be ailing him. Great, therefore, was her astonishment, when his sober face broke into a mirth well according with his laughing declaration that nothing whatever was the matter with him.

Then, a new mood softening his heart, and knowing that she was to be trusted, he took her into his confidence, and told of his talk with Greloire. But he regretted having done this, and grew angry with her, when she began expostulating at his taking such a risk as to venture into the enemy's camp, outside the city.

"But our lieutenant will never permit it," she at last consoled herself by thinking; and so held her peace.

It was the afternoon of the fourth day when Jean, fearing lest Laro might come to seek him, and thinking that perhaps Greloire also would be coming, decided to go to Le Chien Heureux, Pierre having already gone out to see some of his military friends.

The air was crisp, and Jean, walking rapidly, was turning the corner of the street leading down to the inn, when he saw Laro approaching.

"Ha, runaway!" the latter called out, a smile lighting his dark face. "I was but just coming to see you."

Jean now congratulated himself upon having acted so wisely. But he determined to cut the interview as short as possible, lest by any chance Greloire should visit the cottage during his absence, or, worse than all, come to the inn, and find him again in Laro's company.

"Let us go to my room," the captain continued in a lower tone, when he reached the boy and grasped his hand. "I have something to tell you, and a proposition to make."

Jean demurred; but Laro insisted so strenuously as to make the lad decide that acquiescence promised the readiest means of escape.

There was no one about the inn save Thiel, who nodded good-naturedly to the boy as the latter followed Laro across the lower floor and up a narrow, dark stairway, to find himself in a small room, tidy as any ship's cabin, and tucked away like a swallow's nest under the eaves of *Le Chien Heureux*.

Its one window looked out to the cliff, whose granite wall was near enough to be touched by an outstretched hand. But the window was now closed, and a faint tracery of frost-work showed upon its narrow panes. Near it, and serving as a window-seat, was Laro's sea-chest, of blackest mahogany, elaborately brass-bound and trimmed.

"Br-r-r," shivered the captain, as they entered, and he closed the door after them; "'t is scarcely Bermuda air here. But what I have to tell you is soon said; and 't is best to say it here, where no one will interrupt or overhear." And motioning Jean to a big stuffed chair facing the window, he seated himself upon the sea-chest.

Then, leaning an elbow on his knee, and supporting his chin in his palm, he inquired, while scrutinizing keenly the boy's face, "Lad, what has been ailing you these few days

past? Pierre could tell me nothing more than that you were not well."

The long-lashed lids dropped over Jean's eyes as he clasped his hands around his crossed-over knee and rocked himself back and forth, until looking up, with his face holding the dare-devil light which always appealed so strongly to Laro, he asked mockingly, "Have you cooped me up here to find out about my health?"

"Not altogether, lad," was the smilingly spoken reply, made while the speaker was filling a pipe he had taken from his pocket. "There is something else."

"What is it?" demanded Jean, now rather impatiently. "Tell me quickly, for I must go."

At this, Laro looked surprised, and assumed a grieved air as he said, "What has come to you? 'Tis not like you to be so short in manner with your mate. But perhaps you will relent a bit when I tell you that I put to sea this night."

Jean started and stared.

"Aye; this very night will the 'Aigle' set sail for Louisiana," continued Laro; and leaning forward, he laid a hand on the boy's knee, as he added quickly, "Would you not like to go with me — you and Pierre? I will take both, if you but say the word."

Jean's cheeks were filled with sudden color, and his eyes sparkled with excitement. But this all passed away as he said sighingly, "Aye, I would like to go; but —"

"Then it is but for you to come," urged the tempter, without waiting to hear the reason.

This Jean did not attempt to give, but remained silent, while Laro watched the evidences of the struggle he knew was going on in the boy's mind.

"Come — you'll say 'Yes,' and be here by eight o'clock," he said presently, as if assured of success. "We must be under way before nine; and morning will find us well out of this cursed place, where one does everything to the music of cannonading by day, and cannot sleep for it at

night. I will tell Thiel to look out for you at eight and to bring you to me."

Jean paid no heed to these confident words, but inquired, "Why are you going in such haste?" And rising from his chair, he began to walk about the room.

"Well," replied Laro, lowering his tone, "I trust you sufficiently to tell you, if you will come back and sit here quietly. It is not prudent for my voice to be following you up and down the room."

Jean resumed his seat; and Laro said, speaking in the same cautious manner, "You must know that if the Revolutionists are to capture Toulon, it were best that the Royalists get away."

The boy nodded.

"There is in the city a certain wealthy Royalist who has fled from Paris with his daughter Roselle, a most beautiful demoiselle of eighteen."

"Yes," assented Jean.

"He and a few others have made it worth my while to carry them to Louisiana, where they will seek new homes, away from all the disturbances in France; and I myself am nothing loath to get away — for a time at least — from such a place. We have, these many days, been making arrangements; but our plans are now settled, and we sail to-night. You and Pierre —"

"This wealthy Royalist — how is he named?" interrupted Jean, before Laro could renew his insidious arguments.

"The Count de Cazeneuve. Did you never hear of him?"

"Me — no. How should I?" the boy said, speaking rather shortly.

"Because you are one of his own class — better born than you admit," answered Laro, with a sharp look into Jean's face. "Poor rigging can never hide the fine lines of a ship's hull, nor can a common name change a greyhound into a lumbering bull-dog. I should never think to say such a thing of Pierre, but I'll be sworn that the

blood rushing through your young veins is as noble as that in those of the Count de Cazeneuve."

Jean, who had again risen and was walking restlessly about, came and stood in front of Laro, and with anger in his face demanded to know what was meant.

"There — there," replied the captain, with a pacifying air. "I meant naught, and beg you to let my words pass. But we are wasting time, and must come back to business. You will go with me to-night?"

Question though it was, Laro uttered it with an assurance implying that there could be but the one answer.

"No!" was the emphatic response; and Jean walked toward the door. Laro sprang up, and hurried after the boy.

"Why not, my mate?" he asked, laying a hand upon Jean's arm, as if to detain him.

"It is impossible. I cannot — I must not," said Jean, speaking hastily, and like one fearing to trust his resolution. "I will not go without Pierre; and for Pierre and me to desert poor Margot would be dastardly."

"Margot," repeated Laro, stroking his chin. "Is that the good dame I saw when I went to seek you at the cottage?"

"Yes," replied Jean, who was fumbling with the clumsy brass latch, as if annoyed at being detained.

"She is Pierre's mother?"

"Yes," once more. Then, lifting his eyes to meet Laro's intent look, Jean exclaimed, "Let me go! I will see you later on!"

"Pierre's mother, and not your own," persisted Laro, ignoring the boy's impatience.

The latter now turned to him angrily.

"What has come to you, Laro? Why need my private matters stir your curiosity so deeply at this late day?"

"It is not exactly curiosity, my lad;" and the speaker once more laid a hand on the boy's arm. "But I have learned to love you as my own brother or son, and would fain satisfy myself of what I've reason to suspect, — that, like me, you owe no duty to kindred. I want you to cast

your lot with me; and you 'll ne'er regret doing it. A lad of your spirits should be free as the ocean's waves, and not tied to an old woman's apron-strings."

"That is what I am not, nor ever was," declared Jean, his anger rising again; and he shook Laro's hand from his arm.

The captain laughed. "Nay, not you, I'll ever swear — at least not in spirit. But in acts you needs must be, so long as you live as now. Come, lad," he added coaxingly; "make a run of it, and come with me over seas, where you 'll soon learn to be the man that's in you — something you never can do in this beleaguered place. Come with me, I say, and you 'll reap more gold in shorter time than did ever an aristocrat of France."

"Not on this trip, Laro," replied Jean, now calmly, but with unmistakable firmness; for the thought had come of who might be expecting to see him, and was likely to trust him with such a weighty matter as might be given only to a man grown. "Not now — not to-night," he went on, having his wayward impulses well in hand, and thinking only of Greloire's inclination to give him the coveted chance of seeing the man his reckless boy-heart loved above all else on earth. "You have said you would be coming and going; so some day I will turn my back upon France and go with you."

"Well, well; be it so, then," said Laro, although with evident reluctance. "But you 'll not speak to any one of our sailing to-night?"

"Nay — not I. Why should I?" asked Jean, as he opened the door.

"Of course I know you can curb your tongue with all the discretion of a man grown," whispered Laro, his hand on the latch. "But there's need for extra caution just now, on account of my passengers."

"I know — I'll remember," was the boy's cautiously uttered assurance. "I'll see you again before sailing-time."

He hurried down the stairway, and was gone.

It was now well along in the afternoon, with the west wind already touched by the coming night's keener cold, as the bright sun, after shining all day in a cloudless sky, sank lower. The occasional booming of cannon from the ships farther along the harbor to the east came less distinctly than at other times, as the wind blew away from the city.

Few soldiers, and still fewer civilians, were to be seen in the streets, although this day there had been no actual fighting, beyond desultory shot and shell from the English and Spanish ships into the Revolutionists' camp opposite them, and the latter's irregular response. Besieged and besiegers were becoming weary and worn with the almost daily skirmishes and sallies, as, week after week, the tide of conflict ebbed and flowed before Toulon.

His mind busy with new schemes because of his recent talk with Laro, — schemes which seemed to have awakened into new life all the old day-dreams woven into the bosky woodland ways about the old Languedoc home, when he read and re-read the worn volume telling of the Spanish Main and its heroes, — Jean walked slowly along the streets, seeing nothing for a time. He was going toward home, and had almost reached the narrow street upon which stood Margot's cottage, when he saw approaching that which sent his dreams flying, and with them all thoughts of Laro and Louisiana.

It was Greloire, who appeared to have seen him at the same moment; for he paused, as if waiting for the boy to come near.

The latter's fleet steps soon covered the intervening space, and he came up, panting slightly, his red lips apart, and a joyous smile illumining his face.

"Are you come to tell me that I can go?" he cried, with all his characteristic impulsiveness.

"Softly, softly, boy," remonstrated the other, a troubled look sobering his usually laughing face as he turned around, and the two walked along side by side.

"But tell me — have you seen him? What said he? May I go to him? When may I go?" Jean demanded, before they had gone half a dozen steps.

"*Tiens!*" now exclaimed Greloire, seeming disinclined to answer. "What a bombardment of questions!"

"But I want to know if you have seen him, and what he said."

"Ah, now there is a more even pace to your inquiries," said the soldier; but although his tone was light, his face still wore an air of seriousness.

"Then answer me," said Jean, speaking peremptorily.

"Never mind whether or not I have seen him," replied Greloire, rather slowly. "Let it suffice that he knows of my having met with you, and of your anxiety to see him. But he bids you, with his love, to stop at home for the present."

All the glad eagerness left the boy's face, and it darkened with a scowl.

"Be not angry with him. He is sure to know best; and he is but just recovering from a bayonet wound in his thigh, that was like to have cost him a leg."

There was distinct reproof in the soldier's voice, as well as in the words; and Jean exclaimed pityingly.

"Aye," continued the former, "it was very bad for a time; but 't is better now, and the danger is past. Wait quietly here, as he asks of you, and you will be sure to see him in a short time."

"See him — here!" exclaimed the boy. "How can that be?"

The soldier's only answer was to nod.

"How?" Jean repeated, with all his former impatience.

"I cannot tell you that; only wait, and you shall see. He bade me tell you that he would see you here, perhaps, in a few days; and he always does as he promises. He was not pleased that I ever thought to encourage your leaving the city; and so you must promise not to attempt it."

Jean made no response ; and Greloire said, as he touched the boy's arm, " You will promise to do as he asks? "

A rebellious light shone for a moment in the dark eyes turned to meet the soldier's stern look. Then it was gone, and Jean answered with a deep sigh, " Yes ; I will do as he wishes. "

CHAPTER TEN

THE night was less chilly than usual, and a heavy vapor rolling overhead now and again darkened the stars, that seemed to be struggling out from the smothering draperies seeking to hide them as they looked down upon the city, whose silence might at any moment be broken by the uproar of battle.

It lacked but a few minutes of eight o'clock, and the neighborhood of Le Chien Heureux was unwontedly quiet. Inside, however, there was the usual gathering of soldiers and citizens; but they were more subdued than was their ordinary manner of conducting themselves. One and all felt that the siege was drawing to an end; and what this might mean, should the Revolutionists make their way into the city, was direful to contemplate.

Laro was not in the room with the other customers; and Jean, upon inquiring for him, was told in a low tone by Thiel that the captain was in his own apartment.

"I will seek him there," said the boy; and bidding Pierre wait, he started for the stairs. But Thiel, following him from the room, closed the door; and when they were in the passage, near the foot of the stairway, he whispered, catching Jean's arm, "Laro expects you, young master."

"Yes; I promised I would come to —"

"Sh-h!" again whispered Thiel, now warningly, and as if knowing what was to follow. "'Tis not well to say it aloud."

Jean drew himself up, angry that his discretion should seem to be questioned.

"Keep your cautioning for those who need it or will take it," he said. "I am not one of them; neither am I a fool."

"But you are like to make one of yourself, if you were not so born, with that so-easy-to-take-fire temper," retorted the landlord.

The sharp reply upon the boy's ready lips was stayed by the voices of some of the guests, calling boisterously for Thiel.

"Wait here but a moment, while I see what is wanted," the latter whispered, now with perfect good-nature. "Laro is not where you think to find him; but wait, and I will take you to him."

Jean seated himself upon the stairs, and soon heard one of the soldiers exclaim petulantly, "*Dame!* Thiel, what is the matter with you this night, that every time we want anything we have to sing out so loud? What takes you so often from the room?"

"I've a sick gentleman to wait upon," was the mendacious but calmly uttered reply; "and I have but one pair of arms and another of legs, like the rest of you."

"Where is that tallow-faced helper of yours? He is just the one, from his looks, to wait upon ailing gentry."

"Gil? I let him go for the night, to see his mother, who is ill and sent for him."

Here another voice asked, "A sick gentleman, say you, Thiel? Was it he I saw come in here, wrapped up so that one could not say whether he were white or black, — the one who had two women with him?"

"I think I had better give you no more drink this night, Ansel," said Thiel.

"Aye — what do you mean?" demanded the one called Ansel.

"I mean that you must already have too much drink in your eyes, if they saw a woman come into *Le Chien Heureux* this night."

The other man replied angrily. But what threatened

to be a quarrel was diverted by the sound of firearms, followed by shouts from outside, as the door was flung open and an officer rushed in.

"Out with you, every man!" he ordered imperatively, addressing the soldiers, all of whom had sprung to their feet at the first sound of alarm. "Out with you, I say! The enemy have tried to surprise us. To your posts, every one of you!"

There came, even as he spoke, a retaliating fire from Little Gibraltar; and then the night became filled with the uproar that always attended these frequent attacks.

Every soldier was quickly out, and the civilians soon followed. Only Pierre and Thiel were left; and the former had sprung to his feet, where he stood as if hesitating whether to remain, or rush forth after the others.

Jean, who had re-entered the room, was, to judge from his expression, of the latter impulse.

"What are you thinking about, young master?" inquired Thiel, as he hastened to close and bolt the door. Then, without waiting for a reply, he added, turning to face the two boys, but addressing Jean, "You are forgetting that Laro is waiting for you."

"True, I forgot," said the lad, sighing deeply, and looking significantly at Pierre. "There can be no fighting for us."

Pierre silently resumed his seat; but Thiel, with a natural misunderstanding of what had prompted Jean's words, replied, "Truly not, if you are to see the captain. And 't is just as well for the plan afoot that there should be a little fighting to-night; for it will lessen the chance for unwelcome notice."

He then invited Jean to follow him, and, after bidding Pierre wait where he was, and to open the door to no one, he led the way out to the passage.

Here he stopped at the foot of the stairway, and twisting a brass knob, which was to all appearance nothing more than a peg to hold the garments now hanging from

it, the oaken panel rolled back, showing a narrow passage, lit faintly by a dimly burning lantern standing on the floor.

Motioning Jean to precede him, Thiel followed through the opening, and closed the panel. He then said to the boy, "Laro trusts you, my young master, and therefore I must do the same. But I warn you that if ever our secrets are betrayed, you had better look to your handsome throat, for there are those who would not spare its cutting."

Although somewhat startled at this evidence of doings at Le Chien Heureux of which he, like others, had heard scarcely credited hints, Jean concealed his surprise as he answered carelessly, "When you know of my betraying you, then you are welcome to cut my throat."

"Well said," was the approving comment. "Now come with me." And Thiel, picking up the lantern, started down a short flight of steps leading apparently to a cellar.

"Why did you not bring Pierre with us?" asked Jean, as he carefully felt his way. "He is to be trusted every whit as much as myself."

"No doubt — no doubt," admitted the landlord. "But 't is as well to first get Laro's mind as to that. And, too, it were best to leave some one above, to keep the inn until I return."

"What ails Gil's mother?" inquired the boy, recalling what he had overheard.

Thiel chuckled. "If anything ails her we will have to get some one to tell us who knows better than I how to talk with the dead; for such she has been these five years past."

"You are the prince of liars," declared Jean, as they now reached what seemed to be a not very capacious cellar.

Thiel's only notice of the accusation was a scornful laugh, and he paused to brighten the light he was carrying. This done, he raised it above his head, so that there

was shown more distinctly the reserve stock of goods appertaining to Le Chien Heureux. Bales, kegs, and sacks were crowded about, and in some places piled to the rocky ceiling.

"Here—hold this," said the landlord, thrusting the lantern into Jean's hand. He then seized several casks, which proved to be empty, standing against the wall opposite the foot of the stairway, and whirling them aside, brought to sight an iron ring, so near the floor as to have escaped the notice of one not looking for it.

Dropping on his knees, he grasped this ring, and, looking over his shoulder at his companion, who was watching him interestedly, he asked, "Where do you suppose we are, and where going?"

"Down in the rock, under your inn, of course; and we are going to wherever Laro is," was the curt reply.

"Ugh!" grunted Thiel, giving a pull at the ring. "You have as clear and cool a head as Laro himself, you fearless young devil."

A square of the apparently solid wall now rolled up with a grating noise until it was level with his head, as he still knelt; and a rush of damp air, as if from out of doors, stirred the short locks on Jean's forehead, as he stared with wonder-filled eyes into the dark opening that gaped before them.

Thiel had risen to his feet, and now took the lantern, saying, as he stooped to pass through the rude doorway, "Keep close to me, and have a care. We've two steps to go down, and then clear sailing along a bit of path."

"*Peste!* But 't is cold and damp," the boy muttered, as he followed cautiously, with a hand on the wall, which he felt to be the granite of the cliff, as was also the path beneath his feet. He could see nothing, save here and there a jagged bit of the rock above him, hanging like a stony icicle, lower than the rest of the ceiling, and which caught the fitful light from the lantern.

"'T will be warmer in a minute, with plenty of light," Thiel said presently. "We are going down into the heart of the cliff."

Jean soon heard the murmur of voices, although a seemingly solid wall barred his progress. But Thiel pushed aside some coarse sacking that hung against this wall, disclosing a rough wooden door, through whose chinks a glow of light showed from the other side.

A minute later the boy's eyes were nearly blinded, as he followed his companion into a cave-like room, with a floor of rock, which was also the material of its ceiling and walls. It was furnished but scantily; and around a table at the farther side were several men, while somewhat apart from them sat two women.

As Thiel entered, with Jean close behind him, the men ceased talking, and stared with evident displeasure at the boy,—all except Laro, who called out, "Aha, my young mate, is it thyself? Welcome, my sea-gull!"

He put out an inviting hand; then, as the lad came to his side, he said, turning to a slenderly built man of middle age seated next him, with an elbow on the table and a hand supporting his cheek, "Count de Cazeneuve, permit me to present to you my young friend, Jean Lafitte, who is some day to be my mate, and who is as dear to me as an own son."

The count did not change his position, but stared moodily at the handsome boy while murmuring a courteous acknowledgment of his presence. As for Jean, he scarcely heard the words, so engrossed had his senses become with the beautiful face confronting him from the other corner of the room.

It was a dainty face, pink and white; and clustering curls of sunny hair gleamed like gold from out the dark hood of the cloak whose folds partially hid the girlish form.

The young lady was looking at him; and from her clear blue eyes there flashed a smile that opened the red lips to show two rows of little pearl-like teeth, as she said in a

voice whose sweetness held yet a note of command, "Come over here, pretty boy, and talk to me."

She spoke as one accustomed to being indulged and obeyed, and had another so addressed him, Jean would have been quick to resent the words and manner. But now his only feeling was that of delight, as he left Laro and went toward her.

"Bring that stool," she continued, in the same charmingly imperious way, "and sit here by me. I was feeling lonesome in this dreadful place, and if the sight of you is so pleasant, what may not your words do to cheer me?" And she smiled again.

He knew her to be the count's daughter, of whom Laro had spoken; and he felt a still more poignant regret that he was not to sail in the "Aigle" that night.

He brought the stool, and seated himself at her feet. And while she leaned forward, as if to inspect him more closely, and he looked up into her beautiful face, an odor of violets came to him, bringing back, with a rush that was almost painful, memories of the gardens about Languedoc.

They were soon upon the best of terms, although Jean experienced a hitherto unknown shyness as he talked to her, this girl of eighteen, answering her questions, and asking a few in return.

The other woman — the maid, elderly and dark-haired, with a slight scar upon her left cheek, evidently the result of a wound from some sharp instrument, forming an indentation like a perpetual dimple — sat staring past them, paying no apparent heed to their chatter, but absorbed in listening to the account of the fighting which Thiel was giving to Laro, Count de Cazeneuve, and the latter's companions in flight.

"*Ventre St. Gris!*" exclaimed one of these. "But I shall be glad when I can draw a long breath, free from all this!"

"And I," said another of the three. "'T is surely hell come to earth."

"Aye," sighed the count, as he rose and began walking up and down. "I wish we were leagues over the sea toward Louisiana. What time must it be?" he asked impatiently, drawing out a richly jewelled watch.

"It is now past the hour of eight," he continued, pausing to face Laro, who with seeming unconcern was draining a pewter tankard. "Surely 't is time some one was on the lookout for the boat."

"There, count, is our lookout," replied Laro, pointing to a small bell hanging from the ceiling, and from which a stout cord running through wooden pulleys led along, and down, to disappear in the wall toward the sea. "We have but to wait patiently until Gil, below with the boat, shall make it speak. I" — and setting down the empty tankard, he started to his feet — "will go back with Thiel, as I have a final something to do above-decks."

He departed with the landlord; and a smile wrinkled about the corners of his eyes as he noted how completely Jean's attention was absorbed by the fair woman into whose girlish face he was looking.

"It is all very dreadful," she was now saying, — "the fighting day and night, and the sound of cannon shaking the ground. Ah, I shall be so happy to leave it behind; and yet I am sick at heart that I must leave France."

She sighed, and Jean saw the glitter of tears in her eyes.

"But, mademoiselle, you may return when all is at peace again," he suggested, desiring to say something, and with a boy's dread of the tears becoming a flood, as he saw her lips beginning to quiver.

"Ah, no; I fear not, as my father wishes never to return," she replied in almost a whisper, as if not caring that the count should hear her words.

But there was little fear of this; for he was still pacing the stone floor, some distance from them, his head down-cast, and paying little attention to the talk going on around him.

"I do not think that Paris could ever be the same to me

again," she went on in the same carefully lowered voice. "It was so terrible that last night we were there, when the mob burned our house, and we barely escaped being murdered. Many of our servants joined the Revolutionists; and it seemed cruel to have those to whom we had shown kindness turn upon us so treacherously."

"Have you been long in Toulon?" Jean inquired, somewhat at a loss what to say, and yet longing to manifest his sympathy for so lovely a being.

"Since last summer," she answered; and as she wiped her eyes with a dainty lace handkerchief, Jean saw the flash of jewels upon her little snowy fingers.

"Have you always lived in Toulon?" she asked in turn, a smile now chasing away the inclination to tears, like the gleam of summer sunshine through a shower.

"Oh, no," he replied quickly, adding, while a look of embarrassment crept over his face, and his frank eyes wandered from hers, "I came here with my people, for refuge, the same as yourself."

"From Paris?" she asked eagerly. "Did you, too, live in Paris?"

"I have lived there," was his evasive reply; and she, divining his disinclination to be questioned concerning himself, bent toward him as from a sudden impulse while she said, "Did you ever meet people who were strangers to you, and yet who from the moment you looked into their faces seemed otherwise?"

She had laid a hand upon his shoulder, and a puzzled expression showed in his face as he looked into her earnest eyes. But this gave way to a half-mischievous but wholly winning smile as he replied, with a gallantry hardly to have been expected in a lad of his age, "Never — until this moment."

She laughed, and drew her hand away, the wild-rose color deepening in her cheeks as she said playfully, "I think you are a very precocious infant."

"But I will soon be a man," he declared, in a tone which betrayed considerable pique.

"What shall you do — what be, when that time comes — when you are a man?" she asked, a touch of wistfulness coming to her eyes.

"I shall be an explorer," he replied, sitting more erect.

"An explorer?" she repeated questioningly, lifting her arched eyebrows.

"Aye, ma'm'selle; as were De Soto, and Cortez, and Pizarro."

"Ah!" she said softly and with a smile.

"Laro is a great explorer and sailor, and says I am to go with him. Perhaps I shall do so — at least until I have a ship of my own."

The smile was gone as she said, speaking in so low a tone that he scarcely caught her words, "Is he related to you — this Laro?"

"Oh, no, ma'm'selle," he whispered; "I have known him only a few weeks."

"And do you like him?"

She — perhaps unconsciously — raised her voice a little; and the gravity of its tone, coupled with that which showed in her face, caused Jean to stare at her with surprise. He was reminded — and not pleasantly — of what Greloire and Margot had said, and found himself unable to frame a fitting answer to her question.

She leaned forward until her face was close to his own.

"Jean — that is your name, is it not?"

"Yes, ma'm'selle — Jean Lafitte."

"Jean Lafitte," she said slowly and distinctly, "you and I have never heard of one another until this night, and we may never meet again after to-night. I never had a brother; but if I could have one, I would wish him to be like you."

The boy's face flushed with pleasure, yet he was puzzled to find a reply to the compliment.

"Yes," she added, — "to look and be what you seem to-night." "But," after a moment's pause, "I should not like it that you grew to be a man such as I feel this Laro must be."



Again Jean was slow in thinking what to say; and all he did was to look into her lovely face, — into the lustrous eyes fixed so intently upon him.

The other warning had roused his ire. This one, coming from her, gave him but little more than a sense of uneasiness, although with it was a feeling of boyish resentment at her disapproval of one whom he regarded as a friend.

"You may forget me, Jean," she resumed, as he did not speak; "but I shall hope not. Yet, for fear I may slip from your memory, I will give you this ring of mine;" and she drew one from her finger. "I wish you to wear it, and to think it says always, 'Roselle de Cazeneuve gave me to you; and she will always pray for you — that you may be a gallant gentleman, loyal to what is true and right.' Will you have the ring say this to you?"

Her words touched deeply the boy's chivalric, impulsive nature; and bending over the hand that proffered the ring, he pressed his lips to the jewelled fingers.

"Thank you," he said, as, now with a smile, she slipped the little circlet upon the fourth finger of his left hand; and the touch of her own, warm and gentle, sent a thrill of delight through his young veins.

"I shall never forget you," he declared, looking up into her face; "and no matter what or where I may be, you and yours will always have my love and service."

"It is now my turn to thank you," she said; "for" — and a far-seeing look chased the smile from her eyes — "who shall say but that I or mine may call upon you to make good your promise?"

Before he could reply, they were interrupted by the entrance of Laro, with Thiel close behind him; and following the two was Pierre, who with open eyes and mouth stared about him wonderingly.

"The fighting still seems to be going on, my masters," announced Thiel, as he closed the door, and then placed his lantern upon the table.

"Which is all the better for our plans," added Laro,

"as we can sail away on one side of the harbor, with but little danger of being overhauled, while the fighting draws attention to the opposite side."

"Oh, father," asked the girl, who had risen and come close to the count, "shall there be any fighting for us?" And she slipped an arm around his neck.

Jean, who had followed her, stood near Laro, at the end of the table.

"Never fear, m'm'selle," answered the captain, before her father could reply, "but that we will get away safe and sound. We know every inch of this harbor, — my men and I, — just where the open spaces lie, here and there, for us to skim through. We may possibly draw a bit of their fire, but nothing to hurt; for it is quite dark, with a storm coming up, and the wind blows a fine gale from the right quarter to help us on our way. So do not be alarmed, m'm'selle; for no craft in the harbor can catch my 'Aigle,' once she picks up her heels for a run. And —"

Laro's flow of words, to which Roselle had seemed to pay but careless attention, was cut short by the sharp jangle of the bell over his head, causing Pierre to start as if he had been struck, and to stare upwards as if suspecting the bell to be connected with some supernatural agency.

Those who were seated sprang up and began gathering their bundles and packages, as Thiel said, "There speaks Gil, who warns us that the boat is below. Can all be managed without a light?" he added, turning to Laro. "'T would scarcely do to show the faintest spark from the opening."

"It can, Thiel. Here, let me go first and show the way, while the rest follow in single file. You had best let the count come after me; then his young lady, and then her maid. You and the lads will lower the luggage into the boat."

Laro gave his orders hastily, but clearly, after which he turned to Pierre, who stood near him.

"Good-night, my boy; I am sorry you are not to go

with me, for I would like greatly to have your stout heart and strong arm aboard the 'Aigle.' But you will come next time, no doubt, and learn how to make your fortune."

Then he grasped Thiel's hand. "Good-night, old comrade. You had best think twice of my advice while I am away, and make up your mind to close this place for the present, and cross the sea, to a land where you can do a better business, and have no howling Revolutionary mobs and English swine to keep you awake nights."

His eyes had wandered from Thiel to Jean, who stood not far away; and as he now stepped quickly to the boy's side and put an arm around him, the dark face underwent a marvellous softening.

"Jean, my heart of hearts, good-night! May all the saints keep thee, and all the devils fight on thy side! The sorest spot in my heart this night is because of leaving thee behind!"

Jean glanced at Roselle, and found her looking at him in a way that made him draw back from Laro's encircling arm.

"You will come with me next time?" the latter asked, laying his hand on the boy's shoulder.

Jean remained silent, standing with lowered eyes, while the bell jangled a second time.

"I'll be in this port again within two years," added Laro, "and then I am sure you will be ready to come with me. Until then, dear lad, good-night." And he moved away, motioning for the others to follow.

"Good-night, Jean, and adieu," said Roselle, as she was about to pass him. But instead of going on, she paused long enough to kiss him lightly on the cheek.

"Do not forget me," she whispered, "nor what I have said to you."

She was gone, leaving the boy standing mute, sensible of the odor of violets, and regretting ruefully his inability to have acknowledged her gracious farewell. But the sound of Thiel's voice soon aroused him from his self-reproachings.

"Come," the landlord said sharply, — "come with me."

He took the way the others had gone — around an abrupt turn that led into a passage, narrow at first, but widening after they had taken a few steps, so that two persons (or three, if they kept close to each other) could walk abreast.

There was evidently an outlet near by; for the fresh air blew about them, and they heard the waves beating at the foot of the cliff.

At the end of the passage was a rectangular opening hidden in summer by the vines that draped the rocks outside. But these were now a mass of bare tendrils, which Laro pushed away, letting in a square of the night-sky, where black clouds were drifting across the stars.

They all gathered about him, as he whispered hoarsely, "Thiel, where is the ladder?"

"Here — I have it." And Thiel, wedging his way through the others, took his place by Laro's side.

The hooks of the rope ladder were soon fastened into two iron rings bolted to the rock. A coil of rope was then put through the opening, and lowered carefully, until Laro, who kept a hand upon it, felt it grow taut with a pull from below. This he answered by a quick jerk, which informed those in the boat that he and his party were about to descend.

"Good-night again, boy; my heart is sorry to leave thee behind," he said to Jean, who was close to him. "Mind what I tell thee — keep thy precious body well away from those fighting devils, so that I may find it when I return, and in it a heart that loves the sea. Good-by, again, and good luck!"

He had, while speaking, stepped through the opening, and, as the farewell came from his lips,—disappeared down the ladder.

"Child, dost think 'tis possible to climb down to the boat?" asked the count, touching his daughter's arm to

attract her attention, and the anxiety he felt showing in his voice.

"Is it the only way we can reach the ship?" she inquired, speaking in a way that denoted her own apprehensions.

"Aye, so Laro has told us," he answered gloomily, glancing toward the opening.

Here Thiel struck in:

"You said, count, that your daughter had a steady hand and brave nature; if so, then there's naught to fear. But there's many a coil of rope lying about here; and, for safety, we will, if so you say, fasten a bit of it under her arms, as well as the other lady's. Some one of us can hold the rope, to guard against accident, while she climbs down the ladder, which, after all, is as steady against the rocks as a pair of stairs, though somewhat narrow as to the steps. Let one of the gentlemen go down first, to make sure your daughter steps carefully, and to encourage her if need be."

All this was done. Ropes were fastened under the arms of the young girl and of her maid. One of the count's friends followed Laro; then the maid after him; next the count himself, and then his daughter, the two remaining gentlemen going last of all.

When they were below, Jean and Pierre helped Thiel to lower the luggage by means of a hook made fast to a rope, this being the device that had served many a time to lift smuggled goods from boats lying beneath the cliff.

The last bundle was lowered, and those above were pulling up the rope, when a soft, clear whistle came from below; and Thiel lost no time in putting his head through the opening.

"Aye," he muttered, peering down through the dim light, "they are off to a finer country than this; and may luck go with them."

There was no sign of fighting when Jean and Pierre left *Le Chien Heureux* that night; and the sough of the rising wind was all that broke the silence.

Not a word was exchanged between the boys, each be-

ing busy with his own thoughts. But both of them felt sore regret at not being with Laro and his party; and this, in Jean's mind, was deepened by the thought of that lovely face and sweet voice, to him enshrined in an incense of violets, and which he was wondering if he were ever to see or hear again.

"Next time I will surely go," he said to himself, as he and Pierre, after putting out the light which Margot had left for them, took off their shoes, and crept softly upstairs to their respective bedrooms. "Laro said he would return within two years; and in two years I shall be larger, and she will not call me a boy. I will go, and I will find her."

CHAPTER ELEVEN

IT was the night of December 19, 1793, with a cold storm of wind and rain making still cosier the living-room of the cottage, where, not far from the flames of the wood fire that made more ruddy the neatly kept red of the brick hearth, Margot sat spinning, while Jean, curled up in a big chair opposite, watched idly — as many times before — her deft fingers smooth and twist the flax.

The sight of this, and the sound of the wheel, together with the thought of the violet fragrance which seemed a part of Roselle de Cazeneuve, of whom he was then thinking, — these sent his memory straying to the park and gardens of Languedoc.

A sudden longing possessed him, a feeling of homesickness, such as had, quite unknown to Margot, come at rare intervals during the past year, but which he had never yet permitted himself to express in words.

“Margot, dost ever wish thyself back in Languedoc?”

The question, no less than its suddenness, evidently startled her, for the wheel stopped so abruptly as to break the thread. And Pierre, who was reading at a near-by table, raised his eyes from the page he was conning laboriously.

“Back in Languedoc,” Margot repeated, as she picked up the broken ends of the thread. “Nay, not I, if but we could have the quiet and peace about us that we first found here in Toulon.”

“But that will be once the siege is ended,” said Jean, now watching the flames, whose reflection struck glintings from his eyes, like the sunlight dancing on dark pools.

Margot shook her head; and the resumed whirring of her wheel drowned the sigh that issued from her lips.

"Aye," she said, "when it is ended. But who can say what will then befall? No doubt worse than has already, if the Revolutionists are victorious."

"'Tis said they came near getting into the fort this morning."

This information was imparted by Pierre, who was still looking at Jean.

"What of that?" demanded the latter. "It is not the first time they have all but taken Little Gibraltar."

"No; and I'll be sworn they'll soon get in and take it," said Pierre, with an emphasis which left no doubt as to the bent of his sympathies.

"Better have care about voicing such an opinion," his mother declared sharply. And, with a quick ducking of his head, as if the words were the prelude to a box on the ear, Pierre plunged his big hands into his shock of hair, and lowered his face over the book.

Presently Jean spoke again.

"Hast thou heard aught from Languedoc since we left?" he inquired, looking over at Margot, who, apparently lost in thought, sat with her eyes fixed on the fire.

Wondering what new mood had taken hold of the boy, that he should bring up matters of which she had never ventured to speak, but relieved as well to feel that she might now impart to him information she had received some time before, Margot replied, "Yes. The château has been closed since the month after we left, with only Tatro there as keeper; for Monsieur Étienne has returned to Paris, where he is in high favor with the Great Committee."

"*Peste!*" The word, half sigh and half hiss, was full of vindictiveness. "Then the dagger did but slight injury, after all, for all the rust on its blade, that would surely have poisoned better blood, even if the thrust had not let out life."

"Jean, Jean, do not speak so!" cried Margot, looking

aghast. "Surely thou couldst never really wish to kill thy brother! I always claimed that the act was only because of thy maddened brain; and with good cause, as any one with heart and feeling must admit."

"He is no brother of mine!" declared the boy, his face kindling into a fury of rage. "Never you say such a thing again, Margot. My name is not his, nor is he any kin of Jean Lafitte."

She made no attempt to calm him; but her face was troubled as she resumed her work.

"How got you all that news?" Jean inquired, a few minutes later, the anger gone from his voice and face.

"Père Huot had a letter from Tatro, brought by Louis Suer and his wife. They fled from Languedoc, because the neighbors took offence at their showing lack of heart for the Revolution. Ah, 't is sad enough here, Jean, and very dreadful; but the days are as bad in Languedoc. They burned Louis Suer's house, shot his son, and robbed him of all he had."

"I had thought Suer was one of them," said Jean, recalling the stout, thrifty peasant, whom he had heard railing against the king and his Austrian consort.

"So he was, as to politics, and is still. But he held not with them when it came to trying to burn his master's house, and —"

She stopped; and Jean knew that she was thinking of the attack upon the château.

"Hark to the wind — how it pipes! *Sacre!* What a storm!" exclaimed Pierre, rousing again from his book, as there came a dash of rain upon the windows, while a blast roared over the cottage and sent a brisk puff down the chimney.

The flames blew out so fiercely as to make the cat, who had been lying on the hearth blinking drowsily in the warmth, spring to its feet, spitting viciously at the shower of sparks that flew into its face.

"'T is indeed a dreadful storm," Margot agreed, as she

now drew her wheel farther away from the fireplace. "But there is one good thing to it."

"What good can there be in such a storm as this?" queried Jean, who was hoping it had not reached far enough westward to affect the comfort of her whose beautiful face was so often in his thoughts.

"It will put a stop to the bloodshed—for a time at least. The best and bravest soldiers would scarce think to fight in such weather as this," replied Margot, showing rare ignorance of facts.

"Little would they heed, so that it did not wet their powder," asserted Jean, assuming an air of superior wisdom.

She looked at him thoughtfully a moment before she said, in a voice whose yearning seemed tinged with hope, "If thou 'lt grow up to be a good man, Jean, thou 'lt some day make a brave soldier."

"One can be brave without being good," answered the boy, his natural waywardness asserting itself, although he met her earnest eyes smilingly.

"Perhaps so," she said doubtingly. "But surely 't is the best and truest bravery that goes with goodness."

"I doubt if it is in me to be good in the way you mean," confessed Jean, now speaking quite impatiently, as if the subject were not to his liking.

"Your little colonel, whom we all love—he has the bravery I mean. Surely thou must own 't is well to be such a man," she insisted.

"Aye," the boy said with a defiant smile; "but I will be more like Laro."

"Laro!" Margot repeated, her patience now giving place to anger. "The saints keep us from living to see thee grow to be such a villain as Laro! Dost know, Jean, these days it seems to me thou'rt like a soul between Heaven and Hell. The man we all love is thy good angel,—Laro is thy bad one; and betwixt the two art thou this night. I feel 't is for thee to say which of them shall lead thee to thy future."

She now spoke with a seriousness Jean had never before seen her show, and which, despite his self-confidence, disturbed him strangely.

The howling of the storm seemed to emphasize the warning conveyed by her words; but the boy laughed scornfully as he replied, "*Mais*—do not preach to me, Margot, for 't will do no good. What I am, I am, and I cannot be other than I am."

Then, in order to tease her, he began a song of which she had more than once expressed decided disapproval. Laro had taught it to him; and the captain delighted to have the boy sing it for his entertainment, and that of the crowd gathered at Le Chien Heureux, when the rich young voice would make the air vibrate, and stir the slowest pulse, with the rollicking recklessness of melody and words, —

SONG OF THE BUCCANEERS

As tides that flow and winds that blow,
So is the life we rovers know.

No priest nor king his laws can bring
To set the course we choose to wing.
Across the sea, as wild and free

As lightning from the storm-cloud's breast,
We sweep before the tempest's roar,
Or rock upon the waves at rest.

Between our lips the red wine slips
When on our deck the red blood drips.
Its ruby heart will quench the smart
If pity for a foeman start.

Like kings are we, who rule the sea,
Our crowns and sceptres flashing steel.
Rich stores of gold our coffers hold.
No laws can make us quail or kneel.

As tides that flow and winds that blow
So is the life we rovers know.
No priest nor king his laws can bring
To set the course we choose to wing.
So up with sails, to catch the gales
That blow us far across the sea.
Blow high, blow low, away we go,
To live the life of rovers free.

Margot, with compressed lips and stony eyes silently bespeaking disapprobation, had risen, and after putting away her wheel, began to shovel the ashes over the fire, preparatory to retiring for the night.

Jean noted her expression, and exchanged a laughing look with Pierre, who had turned from his book with a sparkle of unusual animation lighting his dull face. But he sang the song to the end; and Pierre, taking a hint from his mother's movements, rose slowly from his chair, and began to bar the shutters.

"'T is a wild night," he said to Jean, as the latter also rose, and, with a yawn, stretched his lithe limbs, as might a young panther, while a still fiercer gust of wind shrieked down the chimney.

"Little doubt as to that; and it is a good thing to shut out."

"I would that we might shut out all other evils as easily," remarked Margot, who was making sure that the closet door was latched, so that the stores within would be secure from the cat.

She spoke with a significance which Jean did not fail to observe; and he asked, laughingly, "Wouldst like to shut me out of doors, Margot?"

She did not answer; and going to her, the boy put an arm around her shoulder as he added playfully, bending his head so that he might look into her averted face, "Has my song angered thee so that I am not to be spoken to?"

She raised her eyes, and he saw tears glistening in them.

"How canst thou have the heart," she asked, laying a hand on his arm, "to delight in hurting me, when I love thee so truly?"

His face sobered, and he kissed her cheek.

"I tell thee, Jean, that Laro will ruin thy body and soul, if thou dost not keep his songs and ways far from thy life."

"Never mind Laro to-night," he replied, stroking her

cheek lovingly. "He is now far-off over the seas, and may never again see France, nor I see him."

"I would be happier if I were certain of that," she said, taking up the candle which was to light them to their chambers above.

They parted as usual for the night, little thinking that this was to be the last of earth's nights for one of them.

CHAPTER TWELVE

IT was the next morning — the morning after the flame-lit, awful night that witnessed the capture of Toulon by the Revolutionists.

There is no need to repeat the story which history has told of its horrors; of the bombardment and assault; of the unspeakable woe that was visited upon those shut up within the doomed city. The night was past; and now had come the grief and sorrow of the living, to fill the day with tears for the dead; now had come the moans and cries of the mangled and dying.

In one of the lower rooms of a small, partially burned house, not far from the blackened ruins of her own cottage, lay Margot, who had been killed while she and the boys were making preparations for flight to a place of greater safety.

The three were in the living-room, where her whirling wheel had filled the peaceful silence of the evening before. She had made up the bundle each one was to carry (taking pains that Jean should conceal upon his person the money intrusted to her by the baron), when a large piece of shell tore its way into the room and entered her breast, killing her instantly.

Scarcely had the boys realized this when they found the cottage to be on fire over their heads. But they had time to half-carry, half-drag Margot's body to the street, and thence to the house where it now lay, stretched upon a rough bench and covered by a blanket, in this bare room, filled with men, women, and children whom fire had rendered homeless during the night.

Outside, before the house, stood a file of soldiers in the uniform of the Revolutionary troops, at whom the home-

less ones within stared apprehensively, as the sergeant in command stood listening to a woman who had guided him and his men to their present halting-place.

"In there you will find them," she said, in a dull, apathetic way, pointing to the door; "and with them is the dead body of their mother, or whoever she was."

The sergeant thanked her; and, after bidding his soldiers to stand where they were, he went alone into the house, the wretched occupants of which shrank away from him, wondering what new horror was about to be meted out to them for daring to be alive.

The bench upon which lay Margot stood in a far corner of the room; and near it, on the floor, Jean was stretched asleep, with Pierre seated beside him, his arms across his drawn-up knees, and his head sunk upon them.

He, too, appeared to be sleeping. But at the sound of the soldier's voice he raised his head to look at him, while a sullen light of grief showed for an instant in his heavy eyes. This, however, softened into recognition, as he heard the kindly tone and words.

"Ah, Pierre, I am glad to have found you!"

It was Murier who said this; and his dark face was full of pity as, after glancing at the bench, he added, "I have been sent here to find you, and —"

He stopped; for Jean, now awake, sat up and stared at him.

"Good-morning, young m'sieur. And I regret 't is so truly other than a good morning," said Murier, nodding, and smiling grimly, as he looked down into the white face and dark-circled eyes.

Jean, making no reply, rose to his feet, staggering as he did so.

"Are you hurt, young m'sieur?" inquired the soldier anxiously. "Or either of you injured in any way?" And he turned to Pierre, who also had risen, and stood nearest him.

"Hurt?" repeated the peasant lad. "Aye, most sorely

— in our hearts.” With this he drew the cover from what lay upon the bench.

“Poor dame!” muttered Murier, his eyes resting upon the calm white face. “The devil himself was unchained last night; and he spared neither the strong nor the weak. Poor dame — the saints rest her kind soul!”

Jean, appearing to disregard what was happening about him, had been staring dully through the open door; and Murier, noticing that he shivered, touched him upon the arm to attract his attention.

“Young m’sieur,” — and the soldier now spoke more briskly — “you are to come with me. My colonel has ordered that you be brought to him.”

Jean glanced at Murier; then his eyes again sought the open door as he said slowly, “Pierre and I are going to Père Huot. We are going to take Margot to his house.”

“Aye; that is where I am ordered to take you,” was the sergeant’s quick reply. “And Pierre also is to come.”

He was moving toward the doorway, when the same woman who had guided him to the house came forward with a cup of coffee, which she offered silently to Jean, while an expression of deep commiseration showed in her haggard face.

But the boy motioned her away as he exclaimed, turning to Murier, “I will not go without Margot!”

“Surely not, young m’sieur,” the soldier assented. “Some of my men shall make a stretcher, and bring the good dame after us.”

He had, while speaking, drawn Jean to the door and out of it, leaving Pierre to follow with the soldiers who were to construct a litter, and bear Margot’s body to the convent of St. Sulpice, which was now Père Huot’s home.

It is not necessary to describe what Jean and Murier saw as they picked their way through the streets, some of them

half-filled with débris, and all of them bearing witness to the horrors of the night before.

Jean was silent, with white face, and stony eyes that stared vacantly ahead, while the soldier held his arm in a close grasp, and occasionally uttered a few cheering words, to which the boy seemed to pay no heed.

And so they went slowly along, until, in a narrow street, which was comparatively free from evidences of the assault, the two paused before the heavy, iron-studded door of a gloomy-looking stone building, whose ivy-hung windows were not much wider than the loop-holes of a fortress.

Murier lifted the ponderous brass knocker, to let it fall with a peremptory clang; and a few moments afterward the door was opened cautiously, while through its crack a single eye, under a shaggy brow, scrutinized him with manifest suspicion.

"Open up, Martin. 'T is I, with the young m'sieur for whom our colonel sent me," said Murier, pushing through the doorway, and drawing Jean after him.

They were in a stone-paved, walled, and ceiled passage, along which Murier led the boy until they reached the entrance to a large apartment; and here, without a word, the soldier left him.

As Jean stood upon the threshold of the dimly lit room, —as he stood leaning against the side of the doorway, his eyes downcast, and the sound as of roaring waters in his ears, he heard, even through this, Père Huot's familiar voice saying, "Thank our Holy Mother, my son, that I see thee safe and unharmed, after this awful night." Then a tremulous hand was laid tenderly upon his bowed head.

A murmuring of other voices came to him; and one of them stirred Jean's benumbed senses strangely, half-delirious as he was from all he had suffered and seen.

Lifting his eyes, he saw before him a face which seemed to have shaped itself from out the drifting haze. It was thin and careworn, with tumbled locks falling over the pale

forehead ; and the gray-blue eyes were bent upon him with a sympathy which aroused all his swooning faculties.

“ Pizarro — my Pizarro ! ” he cried, springing forward ; and the cry was lost in a gasping sob, as he fell senseless upon the breast of Bonaparte, whose arms went around the limp form as though to shield it from further harm.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

THREE weeks later, and a sullen peace had fallen over Toulon, broken only by occasional brawlings in the streets, at times when the citizens were so indiscreet as to voice seditious sentiments within hearing of their conquerors.

Jean was still weak and emaciated from illness. But he was able to sit in his room, or drag himself over to that of Greloire, where the latter was slowly and impatiently recovering from wounds received during the final assault upon the city.

From him the boy had heard — and with outspoken indignation — of General (for such was his present rank, conferred as a recognition of his services in capturing Toulon) Bonaparte's departure, shortly after his own arrival at the convent, which had been turned into a hospital.

"He went away and left me!" Jean exclaimed angrily, the color suffusing his cheeks. "Left me, when I was not able to speak to him!"

"You must remember that it is war-time, *mon ami*," expostulated Greloire, "and that our general has orders to obey, no matter how much they conflict with his private affairs and wishes."

"But had he been in my place," was the hot retort, as Jean's temper asserted itself, "I would not have left him without a word of leave-taking; no, not for all the orders that could be issued."

"I think I may take it upon myself to assure you that he did not do this," said the soldier, who had listened unmoved to the outburst, during which he watched a venture-

some sparrow perched upon the window-ledge, and tapping at the glass as if demanding its morning ration of crumbs.

"What mean you, Greloire?" asked the boy, his anger lost in eagerness.

"That I have reason to know he left a letter with Père Huot, and a farewell message, which the good father will doubtless give you when he sees fit."

"Then why should not Père Huot have told me so before?" demanded Jean, half rising from his seat beside the bed.

"Easy, *mon ami*; sit still," said Greloire calmly. "Do not get excited, else I shall regret telling you anything about the affair. We have to remember that you have been very ill." Tenderness now showed in his tone, and he gently touched the thin hand resting on the coverlet.

But the boy scowled impatiently as he asked, "Where has he gone, — do you know where the Committee sent him?"

The soldier hesitated, while he looked into the imperious eyes fixed upon his face. Then, lowering his voice, he said, "You will not speak of the matter — not even to Pierre?"

"No!" The pale lips closed firmly as the monosyllable came from them.

"A queer combination thou art, of boy and man," said Greloire, more as if thinking aloud than speaking to the subject of his thoughts. "I often wonder at myself for giving thee such trust as I could give to few comrades of my own age."

But Jean was not in a mood to care for compliments, and let his clenched fist fall upon the bed with a force that emphasized his recovery of spirit, if not of body.

"Tell me," he said urgently, — "where has he gone?"

"He received orders from Paris to make a thorough survey of the French sea-coast, and its fortifications. It is a work which would take any other man a year or more to

accomplish; but he, who is in no way like other men, is sure to have it finished in a few months."

"That done, will he return here?"

"Nay, I rather doubt that," was the slowly spoken reply. But, seeing the disappointment that clouded the young face, Greloire added, "Yet that is something of which I can know no more than yourself, *mon ami*. I say what I do only because of knowing that the army is in Italy; and, as ordered by him, I am to follow, when these infernal wounds of mine will let me travel. Why not wait until you see the letter of which I spoke? Perhaps it will tell you far more than can I."

Late in the afternoon of this same day, Père Huot, sitting with Jean in the latter's room, had been informing him of what had transpired since the morning Murier brought him to the shelter and safety of his present abode.

He watched the boy's face carefully as he told him of Margot's burial, and of Bonaparte's many visits to his bedside, while he lay tossing in delirium; and the good priest rejoiced within himself to see the look of dogged grief soften into one of subdued gratification.

"He is a true and wise friend to thee, my son; a man whom I must respect and trust, although I can scarcely do so much as regards the cause for which he battles," said Père Huot, a graver line narrowing his gentle mouth. "I have much to consult with thee about as to the future, Jean, as he and I talked it over; but I could not well speak of such matters before, feeling it better to wait until thy strength had somewhat returned. I have learned more or less of the life led by Pierre and thyself, during this dreadful siege, and regret sorely that my own weak health made me so poor a guardian of thy father's son."

Jean's eyes dropped, and he began swinging his foot uneasily; but he made no reply.

"I have heard of thy intimacy with this man Laro," continued the priest, his kindly eyes now taking a severe expression; "and I know enough of him to tell

thee he is not the man for thee, being who thou art, to have companionship with, to say naught of his being so much thy elder. Margot was right in distrusting him."

The drooping head was lifted, and the fearless eyes kindled through a mist of tears as they met Père Huot's reproachful look, which softened as Jean exclaimed, his voice husky with a curious mingling of sorrow and passion, "Name not Laro to me with poor Margot, Père Huot! I cannot—will not, bear it! All my life will I feel bitter remorse at the thought of how I wilfully grieved her."

"So—so; that is well," said the priest gently. "Then we will speak of it no more, my son. If thy heart be still so tender of feeling, evil companionship can, as yet, have done thee no lasting harm. But there are reasons why now, even more than heretofore, thy associates and acts should be such as accord with thine inheritance. And speaking of this, my son, I have to ask where is the box of papers Monsieur le Baron, thy father, intrusted to Margot for safe-keeping?"

"The box of papers, Père Huot," the boy repeated, as if trying to recall something. "I cannot say; I do not know."

"Know not where it is!" exclaimed the priest, with a marked change of bearing and tone. "How is this? Margot told me, when I urged her to bring it here for safe-keeping, that she had hidden it away securely, in a place known only to thee and herself."

"Yes," assented Jean, the horrors of that fearful night flashing through his mind, and making his voice tremulous. "Yes; the box and bags of coin were hidden in a hole beneath the hearth-bricks. And one of the first things Margot did was to help me hide the money in my clothing."

"I found it there, my son, when we undressed thee; and I have it safely. But the box, the box—what was done with that?"

The good priest spoke urgently, almost impatiently,

leaning forward, and looking fixedly into the boy's perplexed face.

The latter was silent for some little time, staring with abstracted eyes at the floor. But at length he said, after a heavy sigh, "I cannot remember to have seen the box. We made up some bundles—three, one for each of us to carry; it must have been placed in one of them."

"And what became of these bundles?" demanded Père Huot, his thin face flushed by the agitation he could not wholly control.

"Burned, with the cottage," replied Jean, now looking up with a start, as the priest, with an exclamation of dismay, fell back in his chair.

The low sun's quivering rays, pulsing from the dancing shadows of the ivy outside, stole through the window, bronzing the boy's black hair; they lay on the shoulder of the priest's cassock, and rested along the high carved top of the chair, whose arms his slender fingers were gripping tightly, as he sat motionless, the brows scowling deeply over his downcast eyes.

"What matter is it if the box was burned?" asked Jean, in a tone implying how little importance he attached to the fact.

"Know you not, my son, what this box contained?" inquired Père Huot, looking the boy in the face, and speaking sternly.

"Yes—some jewels and papers. What of them?" He spoke as if their existence or destruction were a matter of indifference to him, and his careless eyes seemed to be watching the ivy leaves. But into them, and over his face, had come the reckless look of which Margot would have so well known the meaning.

"Those papers were the proof and vindication of thy birthright," declared the priest solemnly. "Thy mother's marriage certificate was amongst them; and the loss of this may make trouble for thee."

The boy's eyes now turned from the window to meet those of Père Huot.

"Did Margot tell thee, father, of all that befell the last night we passed at Languedoc?"

"Yes, my son; and I have waited for a fitting time to speak to thee of the matter. General Bonaparte and myself talked of it as well; and I must say that thou wert cruelly and needlessly angered and wounded. But I was grieved that thou shouldst have been led to the act that so nearly made thee a murderer. Such a thing, in thee, was heinous."

At this, Jean, trembling with anger, sprang to his feet.

"Did Étienne speak the truth?" he demanded, steadying himself against his chair.

Père Huot started, and looked alarmed, as he always did at such indications of Jean's ungovernable temper. And instead of answering the question, he said soothingly, "Jean, Jean, my son, thou must learn to curb that wicked nature of thine."

"Was it the truth, I say?" cried the boy, heedless of the priest's irresponsive words.

"I cannot answer, when thou dost demand in such a voice, and with such a look," was the reply, uttered with a calmness which so affected Jean that he resumed his seat. Then, with a quick and complete turning of his emotions, he burst into a storm of sobs.

Père Huot made a movement as if to go to him. But he halted in this, and remained seated, saying nothing until the sobbing had ceased and Jean was silent, with his face turned toward the back of his chair.

"My son," then said the priest, "thou art too old to act like a child; and such a wild temper as thine, if thou canst not learn its control, must needs lead thee into ways that will scourge thy soul with remorse, and embitter thy life. But, Jean, my son," and now all trace of sternness left Père Huot's voice and face, "I am not without heart, nor sense; and I cannot hold thee, boy as thou art, to

meeting and bearing, as should a man, all the sore trials which have befallen since our days of peace at Languedoc. As to thy brother, we must forgive the dead, even more freely than the living; and Étienne is now gone where he should have thy forgiveness in full."

He paused, and Jean turned in his chair to look at him questioningly.

"Yes, thy brother is dead," he continued still more impressively. "I regret to tell thee that he was found guilty of a crime the Great Committee never forgives — that of treachery. While seeming to serve their cause, he sold its secrets to the English."

Jean's lips curled with scorn, but he made no spoken comment.

"Étienne now dead, thou, my son, art heir to the title and estates, which, although declared confiscated, may yet be rescued and saved to thee, through the influence of thy friend General Bonaparte, who bade me tell thee this at the proper time, and also to give thee this letter."

He drew a letter from the breast of his cassock, and rising, laid it in the boy's hand, saying, as he did so, "But we reckoned upon having those papers to substantiate thy claim; and now, since they are destroyed, it is difficult to say what can be done."

Jean did not open the letter, but, with its folded edge, traced the carving of his chair-arm as he said, without looking at Père Huot, who was still standing in front of him, "Father, did he — did General Bonaparte wish me to return to Languedoc, as Monsieur le Baron?"

"Ultimately, yes; but meanwhile thou art to stop with me here in Toulon."

There was silence, broken only by the soft sound of the priest's sandalled feet, as he now walked slowly back and forth, with hands clasped before him and head bowed upon his breast, while Jean played with the unopened letter.

Presently the boy asked suddenly, as Père Huot passed his chair, "Why may I not go to him?"

The good father stopped and faced about.

"Go with General Bonaparte!" he exclaimed, lifting his narrow shoulders. "A soldier's camp is scarcely the place for a boy like thee, nor one likely to educate thee suitably for the position thy father's son must occupy in the world."

"But I have no wish to assume any such position," said Jean, as he sat more erect, and with a new light of resolution chasing all the dreams from his face. "I care nothing for the title and estates upon which thou seemst to set such great store."

Again the priest looked troubled; but all he said was, "No — and why not? What new scheme has come into that wilful head of thine?"

"One that has always been there," was the prompt reply. "I could never be such a milksop as was Étienne. I will —"

Père Huot lifted a hand in remonstrance, and his eyes flashed in rebuke. But Jean, angry and reckless, went on, disregarding entirely the attempted interruption, "I'll be no hypocrite, nor pretend to what I cannot feel. I have hated Étienne all my life, and with good cause; and I will never say otherwise, now that he is dead. I would spurn any title or position that had been his, — despise myself if ever again I lived beneath the roof that had sheltered one who spoke such dastardly words of my mother!"

Père Huot, while a priest, was yet a man; and a gleam of ill-suppressed admiration lightened for an instant his expression of disapproval, as he looked down at the high-held head and spirited face, and listened to the hurried breathing that sounded pantingly through the boy's dilated nostrils. But he controlled this at once, and said calmly, as he resumed his slow pacing, "What is this scheme of thine, my son — wilt thou tell me?"

Jean stooped and recovered the precious letter he had let fall during this last outburst, and looked at it silently, until Père Huot repeated his inquiry. Then he answered

sullenly, and as if knowing with what little favor his words would be received, "I want to go over seas, away from France, away to the new world, and carve out a name for myself—gain fame and riches. I should die, like a wild bird in a cage, to live such a life as men pass here. The very thought of it is hateful to me."

"Ah!" exclaimed the priest, whose face now showed a curious mingling of anger, sorrow, and contempt. "This comes from Laro's teachings."

"No, father—indeed no!" cried Jean, all the fire gone from his eyes. "I have always longed to live such a life—always!"

"Always—all of thy very long life, Jean, my son?" said Père Huot, a satirical smile touching his thin lips.

The boy's face became crimson, and he said nothing.

"We have talked long enough for the present, my son," the priest added; "and now I will leave thee. Read General Bonaparte's letter; and may it bring thy mind to holding more worthy ideas for the future than those I have just heard from thee. And Jean, my son,"—coming close to him, and laying a caressing hand on the wilful head,— "I beseech thee, try and harbor kindlier feelings and more Christian-like forgiveness for thy brother. If we cannot forgive one another, no matter what provocation we have received, how may we dare hope that God will forgive us for our own faults, and absolve our erring souls? Ah, I fear me, my son, that thy passionate soul is likely to have a burden of sin that will call for vast forgiveness at the end."

He left the room, closing the door softly, and Jean sat staring out of the window, through which the sun's rays now stole down to touch his brow. But, after musing a few seconds, he roused himself with a quick, nervous movement, and looked again at the letter. A moment later he broke its seal; and the thin paper seemed to pulse with his own heart-beats as he read and re-read its words:

Mon ami, — mon cher ami De Soto, — I am grieved to the heart that I must leave thee. But go I must, relieved by the assurance that I leave thee in loving hands, which must soon nurse thee back to that health I pray will always be thine. Père Huot will tell thee of our plans for thy future. If I have thy love, do as the good father shall tell thee, and pray that we may soon meet in happy days. Let Greloire bring good news of thee, to rejoice the heart of thy

PIZARRO.

As Jean's eyes lingered over the final word, he seemed to see the smile, half-rallying — entirely tender, that was the invariable accompaniment of their playful naning of one another. He seemed to see it touch the firm lips, which, with the pale, grave face, imagination now brought vividly before him, — so distinctly that he felt a thrill from the mesmeric gaze of the calm eyes, their coldness softening as they looked down at him.

All this faded away, and, with a gulping sob, sounding like the cry of a lonely heart, the boy flung his head upon his arms, and lay silent.

The sun sank low and lower, its last rays lingering like a loving touch upon the dishevelled mass of curling hair covering the young head so filled with warring thoughts and emotions — with dreamful schemes so far beyond its years.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

NEW ORLEANS, and the night before New Year's day of 1795, saw the windows of the governor's house ablaze with light, and a constant stream of people coming and going through the wide-flung portals. Selected musicians from the fort played for the dancers in the ball-room, and entertained the large gathering of spectators outside, who looked through the open windows upon the flash of color and sparkle of gems, as the élite of the city and province celebrated the annual ball given by Don Francisco Louis Hector, Baron de Carondelet, Governor and Intendant of Louisiana and West Florida.

Men, some in brilliant uniforms, and others in the civilian's sober garb, chatted or danced with gorgeously arrayed women, whose beautiful faces, bared shoulders, and rounded arms, showed all tints of flesh, the snow or faint cream of purest Caucasian blood being contrasted with the sandal-wood or rich golden hues that hinted at Indian or African ancestry; for, while the aristocratic Caucasian might glance askance at the quadron or octroon belle, the latter held the right to dance at the governor's ball, and in many cases their small hands and fertile brains played a not small part in the manipulation of political and commercial schemes.

In an apartment opening from the ball-room, several men, whose years or tastes made cards more attractive than dancing, were gathered about a table upon which gold and silver were stacked in miniature towers before the players, one of whom was saying, with an unconcealed sneer, directed at a tall, handsome man, who, clad in the British uniform, sat opposite, "M'sieur Stanley's hoard of gold promises to be more than he can well carry away."

The speaker was a wiry-looking little fop, — a Frenchman, of middle age, who was shuffling the pack for a new deal.

The Englishman's lazy blue eyes were turned carelessly toward his opponent, to whose remark he evidently disdained to reply.

"Why not pay more attention to your cards, De la Chaise, and prevent the pile increasing?" inquired a man at the little Frenchman's side — a man who greatly resembled Laro, captain of the "Aigle," and erstwhile patron of *Le Chien Heureux*.

De la Chaise not answering, the other continued, with a malicious light now showing in the dark eyes fixed upon the Englishman's impassive face, "Saw you the Count de Cazeneuve this afternoon, may I ask, Captain Stanley?"

The latter encountered, and appeared to understand, the look of his questioner, and a steel-like glinting showed in his eyes as he replied, "That is an odd inquiry to make, Don Morales, inasmuch as I have it to recall that I met you entering his house as I was leaving it."

"Very true; so you did," admitted Laro (for he it was), speaking in a tone to indicate his having overlooked an incident too trivial for serious remembering.

"So you did," he repeated slowly; "and I was wondering if you left the count in the same devilish humor as that in which I found him."

At this an angry red showed in the officer's cheeks, and a gleam of wrath in his eyes. But, without looking again at Laro, he picked up his cards and glanced at them; then, with an oath, he threw them upon the table, gathered his earnings, and strode from the room.

The others, aware that a game besides that with cards was being played between these two men, — a game of whose true import they were ignorant, — had been listening in silence.

It was generally suspected that Captain Edward Stanley was one of the numerous worshippers of Count de Caze-

neau's lovely daughter; and gossip had been unusually busy with their names during the present week, at the close of which the English officer, having concluded the mission upon which he had been sent to New Orleans, was to return to Mobile, where the garrison was composed equally of British and Spanish troops. It was also understood that Count de Cazeneuve had no liking for the stalwart, calm-faced Englishman.

As soon as the latter left the card-room the other men drew long breaths, as if relieved from a threatened climax, knowing as they did that nothing aroused the governor's ire more than to have brawling or disputes at his balls.

"Why did you try to prick him, Don Morales?" asked one of the players, a tall, spare man, with gray hair and heavy, overhanging eyebrows.

Don Morales laughed scornfully.

"Because it is worth something to kindle a little fire in the cold blood of an English dog."

"It might be an unpleasant thing for all of us had the fire broken out in the shape of a challenge, or, worse still, a fight," said the tall man, as he drew in some shining pieces and added them to the pile in front of him.

"Colonel Zachary is always most cautious," remarked Don Morales, smiling satirically.

"But what is it all about?" inquired another of the party. "Don Morales but asked a simple question. What was there in it to justify any man, English or otherwise, calling for satisfaction?"

"Yes," added a young American officer, looking to be twenty-two or thereabouts, sitting beside Colonel Zachary; "what was there for him to get angry about, for angry he was at something? It could n't have been his cards, for I looked at what he threw down."

"Never mind, Tommy, my son," said the colonel, whose quiet good-nature and all-around likeableness did away with any possible offence to be found in his words; "and never mind, gentlemen all. Don Morales, I think, knows

what possible cause for a quarrel lay in his question to Captain Stanley."

"See here, Don," inquired the quick-witted ensign, who, although a recent widower, with a young boy, was—in secret—one of Roselle's adorers, "is it that you know or think he went to see Count de Cazeneuve this afternoon, and that his asking for the daughter's hand aroused the old man's temper?"

A curious and not pleasant expression came to Don Morales' eyes, and the colonel said, now speaking somewhat sternly as he touched the young man's arm, "You are forgetting your usual code, Tommy, to say nothing of your good sense. This is neither the time nor place to be discussing such a sacred matter as a lady's affairs."

Ensign Stewart bit his lips, and appeared to be taking himself to task; but presently he broke out again with:

"I say, Don Morales, how is it that you and the old count are so intimate? What sort of business is it that you and he are engaged in?"

Covert smiles, which the questioner failed to notice, passed over many of the faces around him, and a tinge of color showed for an instant on Colonel Zachary's sallow cheeks.

Laro, without looking at Stewart, laid down a card as he answered carelessly, "When you have been here sufficiently long to know something of the cotton and indigo raised by the count, and become aware of the fact that I own the vessels that carry them to market, you will not need to ask such questions."

"Oh, is that it? And for how long have you known him?" asked the persistent young man.

"Since I brought him from France, two or three years ago," said Laro, still with his eyes upon his cards.

"Is it true, what I have heard, Don Morales," now inquired De la Chaise, "that you sail for France in the morning? If so, I am of half a mind—yes, three-quarters, to ask you to let me take passage."

"I carry no passengers," was the brusque reply, made while the speaker was drawing in some winnings; and Colonel Zachary, looking distinctly annoyed, remarked, "I was not aware, Don Morales, that you kept the community informed as to your sailing hours and destination."

"I do not," replied Laro, with a quick, meaning glance, which the colonel met with a slight smile. "But there seem to be those who know my business better than I know it myself."

"When shall you be back here?" asked De la Chaise.

"When my vessel reaches New Orleans."

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

CAPTAIN STANLEY, who had returned to the ball-room, wended his way amongst the dancers, his progress impeded by some fair lady who greeted him graciously — often eagerly, and forced him to pause for an interchange of vapid nothings. He then visited all the apartments open to guests, until he was convinced that the count had kept his daughter at home, for better protection against further intercourse with the handsome suitor he had rejected so scornfully that same afternoon.

This he did with scant courtesy, but firmly, giving as his reason that, while endorsing, to a certain extent, the democratic and cosmopolitan ideas and practices of his adopted country, he would see his daughter dead before permitting an Englishman to become his son-in-law.

But English love, like other love, laughs at all the barriers a stubborn parent may seek to interpose; and Count de Cazeneuve's decision was not calculated to discourage so strong-willed a man as Captain Edward Stanley.

He had acceded to his sweetheart's wishes by going, in proper form, to her father; and, the matter having culminated as the lovers had feared, nothing was left but an elopement, for which, in view of the count's probable refusal, all the plans had been arranged.

Poor little Roselle! With her heart now, and for the first time, absorbed by a love that was brave to dare all things for love's sake, she had as much power to oppose Captain Stanley's will as has the victim which some beast of prey has seized and is dragging away to the jungle.

It was shortly after midnight when a tall man, enveloped in a long cloak, and followed closely by a stalwart negro, who bore a sizable bundle upon his shoulders, looked toward the brilliantly lighted windows of Count de Caze-neau's house, whose inmates were evidently celebrating, after the customary fashion, the New Year's advent. He paused a moment in front of the rambling, low-built dwelling, and then passed on, muttering words which were scarcely a benediction upon its owner.

After a walk of some twenty minutes, the man and his silent follower climbed the low wall that bounded the count's domain, and, with the night wind rustling the denuded cotton-stalks about them, struck off across the broad fields until they reached the edge of some woods that rose, a dark boundary line, at one side of the lonely plantation.

Here they paused, and looked to where, quite a distance away, the flames of two huge bonfires showed many fantastic figures — those of the slaves, who were, like irresponsible children, celebrating, after the manner of their race, the brief respite from labor accorded them by their exacting master.

The native slaves, of whom the greater part had been brought from the States farther north, clustered around one of the fires, the merry rasping of a fiddle furnishing an accompaniment for their characteristic songs and dances, while about the other were the imported negroes, mostly Congoes, who retained much of their original barbarity, and for whom the sullen "tum-tum" of a primitive drum served a like purpose for their revels. A long line of them, both men and women, the latter with gaudy-colored skirts held high, were performing, vis-à-vis, a native dance, advancing and retreating as their shrill voices came to the listeners' ears in a monotonous, reiterative phrasing which sounded like —

"Sieur la coupe — sieur !
Sieur la coupe — si !"

The baying of a hound from the slave-quarters was heard, faint, but clear, and the suggestive notes appeared to bring disquiet to the man's dusky follower, for he began to move restlessly, and glance about with manifest apprehension, while he drew closer to his master, who now, wheeling about, pushed on into the wood.

He went forward with a confidence showing that he was on not unfamiliar ground; and a few steps brought the two to a small clearing, where the semi-darkness was made a little more cheerful by a flickering of red light, coming through the chinks of the closed door, as well as from the uncurtained window, of a small cabin.

The negro now hung back as he muttered tremulously, "'Fo' God, Marse Stanley, sho' yo' ain't gwine in yonder?"

"Why not, you fool?" demanded Captain Stanley, turning with a threatening gesture.

"Marse Stanley knows fo' sho' dat Tate 's no fool when hit comes t' fightin' Injuns, an' standin' ober Marse Stanley's body t' tote hit off safe," was the humble reminder of the speaker's past services. "But fightin' Injuns an' fightin' de real debbil hisself ain't de same t'ing. Dat ar 's Zeney's cabin; evvy nigger in New O'leans kin tell yo' de t'ings Zeney kin do. I 'low, Marse Stanley, dat ef we goes in dar, lak 's not she 'll git mad, an' voodoo us. Lak 's not we 'll done come outen dat do' wid horns sprangin' outen our heads, an' huffs on our feets."

He ended with solemn impressiveness, which was answered by a scornful laugh, as his master, bidding him remain where he was, stepped quickly forward and entered the cabin.

A fire lit the interior, which was deserted, save for a small, raggedly clad urchin of ten, whose black arms and legs seemed to have long outgrown their scanty clothing. He was roasting some yams in the ashes, and knelt with his back to the door, while he crooned, all oblivious of the intruder —

"Snake bake der hoe-cake,
Set der frog ter watch hit.
Frog went ter sleep
An' der lizard come an' stole hit.
Bring back mah hoe-cake,
Yer long-tailed Nannie, oh!"

The last word was accentuated by a low howl as the singer saw the tall figure standing beside him.

"Where is Zeney?" inquired the officer, after glancing about the cabin.

The boy stared with fright at his questioner, looming so far over him in the firelight, which struck gleamings from the breast of the uniform, where a slight parting of the cloak-folds revealed scarlet and gold.

"Are you deaf, you black monkey? Where is Zeney, I say?" Captain Stanley repeated impatiently.

"Granny? She 's done gone t' keep New Y'ar's," stammered the little negro, rising cautiously to his naked feet and backing away from the officer's stern eyes.

The latter now understood how Zeney, having — although reluctantly — given, through the late afternoon, such aid as was in her power to the carrying out of her young mistress' plans for an elopement, had then betaken herself to the bonfires, where, appearing to join in the festivities of her fellow slaves, she would be less likely to fall under her master's suspicions when his daughter's flight should be discovered. But her cabin was at the officer's service; and this was of greater importance than the presence of Zeney herself.

A rustling made Captain Stanley turn quickly; and a new light came to his face as his eyes fell upon a shrouded girlish figure standing in the doorway, with a taller woman's form behind her.

Down upon the river, hidden away under the overhanging bank, amid the sedges and other water growth, was a commodious boat that had been stored with all things needful for the flight. The elopers and their servants were soon

aboard; and only the stars saw the craft pulled cautiously up-stream by the strong arms of Tate, the faithful slave, with the maid, Barbê, on the seat behind him, while in its farthest end were the two who, for love's sake, had cast aside all former life, and broken all ties.

For Roselle, these were the ties of filial love and duty, and for Captain Stanley those of honor; for he had deserted his command, and was flying to the wilderness farther north, to — for the time at least — hide, with his new-found dream, amongst the friendly Choctaw Indians, where he could count upon reasonable security from pursuit.

And the woman, trusting him implicitly, faced an unknown world, — faced it fearlessly and undoubtingly, seeing naught but the dawn of a perfect and fulfilled love, that yielded to this man its uttermost depths of passion.

As for him, the loved one, this was by no means his first experience of the sort; but he was honest, at least, in believing himself to be in earnest.

And so he held her close, as they sat side by side, his cloak about them both, and her head pillowed over his heart, while the slave's oars pulled the boat swiftly, their rhythmic dip, or the occasional cry of a loon, being the only sounds besides the rippling water to break the silence.

Some one has written that in love —

“There is always one loved, and one who loves.”

And thus it was with these two.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

ON New Year's day Laro left New Orleans for France; and when, seven months later, he sailed away from Toulon, bound for the coast of Barbary, with him were Jean and Pierre Lafitte.

The purposes of this story require but a general reference to Jean Lafitte's life during the fifteen years which ensued after he left the country of his birth, and linked his fortunes into those of Laro.

He was then a lad of fifteen. And, until he arose above the consequences his heedless youth had imposed upon his better self, his life was passed ashore and afloat, as best served the immediate interests at stake; at times taken up by the cares and responsibilities of legitimate business, at times passed amid scenes of wildest adventure and deadly peril. He, while growing to manhood, alternated between the counting-room and the quarter-deck, associating now with men of probity and position, and again with desperadoes and cut-throats.

During this period, Laro — known in New Orleans as Don Morales de Castro — was, in connection with Count de Cazeneuve and other more or less prominent men, engaged in various speculative schemes, some of them being within the law, and others outside of it. The former included ventures in trading, mining, and timber-cutting, whilst among the latter were smuggling and slave-trading. These operations involved the ownership of many vessels, together with the employment of many men, and, taken as a whole, they were very successful.

Smuggling and slave-trading had always been within the line of Laro's occupations, and they were matters to which

he gave his personal attention, making many voyages to and from the French and African coasts.

Then latterly, in addition to his other nefarious pursuits, and under cover of letters of marque issued by one or another of the newly formed South American republics, he preyed lawlessly upon whatever commerce came within his reach.

His own brigantine, the "Black Petrel," was of remarkable speed, heavily armed (ostensibly for its own protection), and carried a crew containing outcasts from all nations, but skilful sailors and brave fighters. If they captured a ship flying the flag of a hostile country, the prize was, according to circumstances, taken into port for condemnation, or destroyed at once. But, whatever might be the nationality of a richly laden vessel encountered by the "Black Petrel," the colors it flew had but little effect in deciding its fate, or that of its crew.

In all these various schemes Lafitte was an interested party; and, in earlier years, he had been an actual participant in prosecuting some of them, his ability and skill being such that, while still under twenty, he became Laro's trusted lieutenant, upon whom devolved all duties to which the former was unable or inadequate to give his personal attention.

The tall, handsome lad of Languedoc, Paris, and Toulon had developed into a man possessing rare gifts of person and mind, together with a store of energy and resource which would have won success in any avenue of life. Himself a stranger to personal fear, he was quick to recognize bravery in another, and his chivalrous nature was never unresponsive to appeals from his less fortunate fellows. Then, too, his alert faculties, rapid perceptions, and correct judgment, together with an intuition which in these days would have been reckoned as "second-sight," made him a most valuable factor in Laro's operations, while he possessed a magnetic force which, besides giving him a powerful influence over his associates, and other men of his own

class, enabled him to keep within bounds the crews and gangs of men under his immediate direction.

Such was Jean Lafitte at thirty, and such, in brief, had been his life during this period — one so filled with events and adventures as to make his earlier years, and the actors in them, more or less dim, according as they had fixed themselves upon the receptive element of his nature.

Even Laro, the bluff and picturesque sailor who had exerted so strong an influence upon the lad when they met at *Le Chien Heureux*, was hardly recognizable in the crafty and unscrupulous adventurer with whom later years had made him so familiar, and with whom he was now forced to be in such close contact.

As for Bonaparte, he had become Napoleon, the monarch to whom crowns were baubles, and thrones were playthings; who had recast the continent of Europe, and opened a new chapter in the history of France.

Jean had received no word from him after the letter delivered by the hands of *Père Huot*; and grievous had been the boy's disappointment as the months passed without bringing any sign of remembrance from the man who was the one greatest love of his life.

But his was a strong and healthful nature — buoyant and vibrant; and, as the time went by, the acute edge of his grief had been worn away, to be succeeded by a feeling akin to apathy. He had been forsaken by him whom he loved; and, accepting this as a fact, he had relinquished every hope of a future reunion.

All this had its natural effect; and, coupled as it was with a vague but unchanging determination to follow the career of adventure which had been his boyish purpose in life, the personality of Bonaparte became less and less real, until all that remained was a love which was, in itself, largely an abstraction.

Margot was still a reality to him because of her representing so much of motherly care, and by reason of her ever manifested love, of which he had found much to

remind him in the unobtrusive loyalty and devotion of Pierre.

The latter was now the only tangible tie connecting Jean Lafitte with his boyhood, — big-hearted, brave Pierre, sluggish in thought, but sound of judgment and clear of purpose; strong of arm and mighty in action, who now, as ever, stood at the side of his foster-brother. He had, some two years before, abandoned his sea-faring life, and, in partnership with Jean, established a large smithy at New Orleans, where the firm of Lafitte Brothers had become well and favorably known through the work turned out by their skilled slaves.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

IT was late in a sultry, almost breezeless evening in September, 1811, that the ship "Condor," belonging to Laro and his associates, dropped anchor in the harbor of Fort Royal, Martinique.

She was, for that day, enormously large, being of almost seven hundred tons burthen, and very broad of beam, having been constructed for carrying to European ship-yards the masts and spars cut in the North American forests, and sent in rafts down the Mississippi to New Orleans. But her lines were tolerably fine, she carried a huge spread of canvas, and with a proper wind, could hold her own against many a lighter and more slender craft.

She had now but a single passenger, if such he could be termed; for it was Jean Lafitte, returned recently from a mission which will be referred to more particularly later on, and who had come from New Orleans for the purpose of meeting Laro, whom he expected to find waiting at Fort Royal.

This expectation was verified as the "Condor" entered the harbor; for from its deck Lafitte's keen eyes discerned, amongst the lights showing from the few vessels anchored about, the private signal of the "Black Petrel."

As the hawser tautened and the ship began to swing to the tide, her captain, Jude, a stalwart Portuguese, approached Lafitte, and after saluting him, inquired, "Now, my captain, what are your commands?"

"I will go ashore," was the reply; "for there I shall more surely find Captain Laro than aboard the 'Black Petrel.'"

Darkness hid the grin upon Jude's swarthy face, the derisive expression of which indicated clearly his opinion of Laro's liking for the allurements to be found on shore; but he only said, "Will you take your luggage with you, my captain?"

"No, I shall not need it. Keep all my things here until I tell you where to send them. And order your boat's crew to wait for me at the wharf."

Jude saluted again, and hastened forward to give his orders, which were obeyed so promptly that before ten minutes had elapsed Lafitte was being pulled ashore.

His search proved unavailing, although he ascertained that Laro had been seen in the town; and after visiting several of the places where he was liable to be found, Lafitte went to an inn not far from the wharves, and ordered supper.

It was served inside; but after eating, the young man went out upon a balcony overlooking the water, where a waiter brought him coffee and cigars.

Here he sat enjoying the coolness, while he sipped and smoked, his mind dwelling upon the scenes through which he had recently passed, and the forms — one, more especially — who had peopled them, when there came to his ears the sound of a voice whose mellow resonance thrilled him strangely, sending his thoughts whirling into the past, and stopping half-way the cup he was carrying to his lips.

"No, thank you, landlord, for I have already supped, and I wish only to take a breath of sea air outside, before going to bed. And I trust you will not fail to have me aroused in the morning, as we sail at an early hour."

The air was yet vibrating with the hearty tones as the speaker came through the door; and a lamp hanging from the ceiling of the balcony flashed its rays into the face of Greloire.

His head was bared, and the abundant hair was now well streaked with gray; he had grown stouter, with every indication of good-living; but he still showed the unmistak-

able carriage acquired by military discipline, although, instead of a uniform, he wore the attire of a well-to-do citizen.

There was little alteration in the expression of that frank, sunny face; and Lafitte knew at once that the brave, soldierly friend of his boyhood was standing before him.

The recognition was not mutual; for Greloire, after a careless glance at the younger man, crossed the balcony and seated himself near the rail.

Lafitte was, for the moment, undecided as to what to do, — whether to reveal his identity, and risk hearing whatever comments Greloire might make upon a name and career which already had become known in two continents, or to remain silent, and thus forego this unlooked-for opportunity for knowing something definite in regard to the man who was still dear to him — he who was now Emperor of France.

But all indecision was soon routed by the realization of what was represented by the face and form so close to him, and come to life, as it were, from the dead. The sight of the candid face and frank blue eyes recalled, by a curious mental process, their very antitheses — that grave, pale face, with its clear-cut features and calm gray eyes. The living present seemed to animate the dead past; the reality of Greloire gave actual life to the ideal Napoleon.

Lafitte rose and went over to where his old friend was sitting.

"Pardon, monsieur," he said, bowing slightly as Greloire looked up; "but I think I have had the pleasure of meeting you before."

"Possibly — very possibly," assented the other, rather indifferently. "I have met many men during my two weeks' stay in Martinique." And he looked off across the water as he flicked the ashes from his cigar.

"But," continued Lafitte, showing no annoyance at the brusque manner he remembered so well, "I had the pleasure of meeting monsieur many years ago, in France."

"Ah," said Greloire, now more courteously, and with a show of interest, as he turned to the speaker. "May I ask when?"

"Long ago in Languedoc, and Toulon," replied Lafitte, fixing his black eyes upon Greloire's face. "We met at Le Chien Heureux, in Toulon; and the last time I saw you was at the Convent of St. Sulpice, where you were recovering from wounds received in the final assault upon the city."

Greloire, who had risen slowly, was now looking up into the eyes considerably above the level of his own, his face showing an amazement so intense as to pale the healthful hue of his cheeks; and with one hand he grasped the rail, as if to steady himself.

"*Mon Dieu!*" he exclaimed, passing the other hand before his eyes. "What means all this, monsieur? I can recall but one who could speak such words — a boy —"

"A boy then, and who now, as a man, stands before you," interrupted Lafitte, a sudden emotion filling his low voice.

"Can it be possible that you are Jean Lafitte — Lafitte, the pi—"

The word was cut short by a flash from the young man's eyes, even as a sabre-stroke might lop off the hand raised for a blow.

"The first is the name by which I was known in Toulon, and my friends still use it. The second is a title given to me by my enemies, and which I do not recognize as appropriate."

He spoke with stern composure, and with a dignity well becoming his tall, straight figure and refined face, while Greloire stared at him in silent astonishment.

"Which of the two, monsieur, do you prefer to use?" Lafitte added, now taking a step backward, but not removing his eyes from Greloire.

"Pardon me," said the latter, to whose face the blood had been mounting swiftly, "for I intended no offence. It was only that I was filled with amazement at seeing you again, and spoke hastily — without choosing my words."

"And yet," replied Lafitte, in a tone whose bitterness was apparent, "you but voiced the term you have heard many times."

"I prefer to voice my own heart's dictates, face to face with you," declared Greloire heartily.

"Then you prefer,"—began Lafitte, his face softening, and his eyes taking a different light.

"To call you Jean, as I did years ago," Greloire broke in impetuously, extending both hands, which were welcomed by the firm grip of the younger man's sinewy fingers.

"*Bien*," the latter said. "Let it be so. And you—what shall I call you,—marquis, duke, or marshal of France?"

A smile now circled the sensitive lips, and the voice held a note of raillery.

"I will soon tell you," replied Greloire, now entirely at his ease. "But first be seated, *mon ami*."

He resumed his chair, while Lafitte took another one near him.

"Shall we have some wine?" continued Greloire. "Our friend the landlord has some fairly good vintages."

"Thank you—no; at least not for me."

"Then not for me. And perhaps it is as well, for I have some papers to look over before retiring, which call for a clear head; and I must be astir early, as our ship sails soon after sunrise."

"Then we have no time to waste upon trivial matters," said Lafitte, in a tone of impatience which reminded Greloire of the old days. "Tell me of yourself, and of—Napoleon."

Lafitte endeavored to end the sentence as he had begun it; but his companion did not fail to observe a slight hesitancy which preceded the utterance of the name of him who was associated so closely with their former intercourse.

"The first will take but a short time," he replied laughingly; "for I am not a nobleman, nor yet an officer. Indeed I left the army six years ago, on account of sundry attentions paid to my body and limbs by the enemies of

France, who thus rendered me unfit for hard service against them, and I am now Monsieur Félix Greloire, attaché of the emperor's household. As such I go upon various missions; and my business here relates to the settlement of some matters connected with certain property belonging to her Majesty the empress, who, as you know, is a native of this fair island. A fine place it is, both as to climate and people; but Louisiana is far more to my taste."

Lafitte appeared to observe the irrelevancy of this last remark, for, with a keen look at Greloire, he said, "Louisiana! What do you know of Louisiana?"

"Much — that is, of New Orleans, for I was there several months, in the autumn of 1803, with Laussat, when the Spaniards turned the province over to him as the emperor's representative."

"In the autumn of 1803?" repeated Lafitte.

"Yes."

"I was then absent from Louisiana," said the young man, after a moment's thought.

"So I learned, when I made inquiries for you. But I heard something of you, and still more in regard to that Spanish rascal who took you away from Toulon, not long before I went there to get you myself."

Greloire put no special emphasis into his tone, although his eyes were still bent upon the face of Lafitte, who was looking away from him, and toward the water. But the words cut into the young man's thoughts as an unexpected dagger-thrust might have pierced his breast.

"What mean you by that?" he demanded, almost as if resenting an affront, and turning quickly to meet Greloire's intent eyes.

"This, *mon ami*," was the slowly and distinctly uttered reply, as if the speaker intended that every word should find a common mark: "That when General Bonaparte, late in October of 1795, sent me to Toulon, in order to bring you to him at Paris, I found that you and Pierre had already gone with Laro, bound for Louisiana."

"Who told you this?" inquired Lafitte, with an entire change of manner; for now he spoke mechanically — in a perfunctory way, as if for the sake of saying something while he collected his thoughts.

"A dozen people — Thiel amongst them. I went first to Père Huot's house, and there ascertained that the good priest was dead. I then visited Le Chien Heureux, and learned what I have told you."

Lafitte turned again from Greloire, and settled down into his chair; and the latter saw the quick rising and falling of the young man's breast as he folded his arms across it.

Presently Jean, without lifting his eyes, asked, in a stubborn, dogged tone, and as though expecting an answer he did not wish to hear, "Do you mean to have me understand that he — General Bonaparte — sent you to Toulon after me?"

"Most assuredly. He, as I have already told you, sent me in the autumn of '95. It was the first time he had been comparatively free from care since leaving Toulon, where he supposed you were still under the charge of Père Huot, being fitted for the career he — our general — had planned for you, — one that would keep you close to him, and insure your future."

"How know you all this?" asked Lafitte, in the same sullen way.

"From himself; for he knew what I thought of you, and talked quite freely while giving me my instructions."

Lafitte had now recovered — apparently, at least — from the effect wrought upon him by Greloire's surprising intelligence; and, whatever might be his feelings, it was evident that he did not care to make any further manifestation of them.

"Of course," he said, straightening himself in his chair, and resuming his former manner, "I am greatly astonished at what you have told me, for I had supposed, and with good reason, that General Bonaparte had forgotten my very existence, and that I must shape my own life."

It was now Greloire who showed emotion; and there was a mingling of reproach and indignation in his voice.

"*Mon Dieu!* How could you think this of him, who never forgets? He was in no position to send for you until he had made himself firm with the government, and knew something as to his own future. This did not come until after he had repulsed the attack made by the National Guard upon the Convention. It was early in October; and as soon as matters were quieted, and he felt his position secure, he lost no time in sending for you. He was, before this, in one place or another, sometimes seeking service, at others having every moment filled with important affairs. But he never forgot you; and, when the proper time came, both for him and yourself, he made ready to receive you. Cannot you understand?"

"Yes," was the reply, tinged by a note of sadness the speaker could not wholly repress. "I see it now; and, had I then known all you have now told me —"

He paused, and Greloire added quickly, "Your name might be one of the most illustrious in France."

"Perhaps, old friend — perhaps," said Lafitte, in a tone of deprecation, while a bitter smile touched his lips. "But it was not to be, for fate had decreed it otherwise. The emperor is called 'The Man of Destiny.' So, I think, am I; so are you, and all other men. Our futures are wrought out before we are born, and acts of ours can change them but little. The emperor's destiny has taken him in one direction; mine has taken me in another. This being so, all that I can do is to remember him, and ever be grateful to him for his interest in me and his goodness to me; for what he would have done, had not destiny ordained otherwise. You will see him upon your return to France?"

"Surely, *mon ami*; I am to report to him at once, wherever he may be."

"Will you deliver to him a message from me?"

"With pleasure."

Lafitte, after glancing at his watch, rose, as did Greloire;

and the two men, so strangely thrown together again, stood confronting each other as the younger said, looking down into the face of his old friend, "Give him my homage for his own greatness, and for the splendor he has brought upon France. Convey to him all my heart's gratitude for his kindness and protection when I was a boy, and for what he would have tried to make me as a man. Tell him that I love him, and will ever love him, and that no sacrifice he may wish or accept will be too great for me to make in his behalf. Can you remember all this?"

"Every word; and I will repeat it faithfully."

As Greloire said this he made a movement as if to resume his seat; but Lafitte, extending his hand, said somewhat hurriedly, "Thank you, my old friend; and now I must leave you."

"Why so soon? It is early yet."

"I know; but there are important matters requiring my attention, and I must look after them."

Lafitte spoke carelessly, with no sign of the struggle through which he was still passing.

"You sail to-morrow?" he added inquiringly.

"Yes, at the early tide."

"Adieu, then, old comrade," said Jean, grasping Greloire's other hand. "This may be our last meeting, but it will not end our regard for each other."

"Indeed no, nor our thoughts of one another," was the hearty response, accompanied by a tighter clasp of Lafitte's slender fingers; "and I trust it may not be the last, by many, of our meetings. Are you never coming back to France?"

"It is not likely. But who shall say? Destiny may yet send me back to the land of my birth."

"I pray that it may be so. Meantime I thank all the saints for bringing us together, and for the message you have given me."

"And I am fully as grateful for the opportunity to send it by you," said Lafitte. "You will not forget me?"

"Never."

"Nor I you. Adieu, old comrade."

"Adieu, *mon ami*."

One final hand-clasp, and Lafitte turned away. But, after taking a few steps, he faced about and went back to Greloire, who stood as he had left him.

There was a momentary silence, while the two men looked at each other.

"One thing more," then said Lafitte hesitatingly; "one more question, which you may answer or not, as you choose."

"I will answer whatever question you may ask," declared Greloire; "and I will answer it upon my honor."

Lafitte appeared irresolute, as if the question were of such grave import that he dreaded an unfavorable reply. Then, laying a hand on Greloire's shoulder, he asked, "What said he — Bonaparte, when you told him that I had departed from Toulon?"

"He seemed disinclined to believe me, and asked many questions, as if to assure himself that I was not mistaken."

"Then what said he?"

"Nothing."

"You have told me all I wished to know, and I thank you," said Lafitte, again holding out a hand, which Greloire clasped firmly as he replied, "I have been honest with you, *mon ami*."

"That I know, old friend. Adieu, and *bon voyage*."

"Adieu, and *bonne fortune*."

With this they parted; and Lafitte, returning directly to the wharf, ordered the boat's crew to row him back to the "Condor."

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

IT is doubtful if, taking humanity as it is, the mind is capable of experiencing a more acute feeling than that of self-reproach, when this arises from the contemplation of acts or omissions which have had a controlling effect upon our own fortunes or happiness.

They may have been the result of impulse, or selfishness; of hasty conclusions, or careless decisions; of neglect to apply proper reasoning, or calm judgment. They may have come from wasted opportunities; from indecision, or procrastination; from the failure to take, at its flood, that tide which "leads on to fortune."

But, to whatever cause they may be attributed, the thought of the facts themselves, and the realization of our responsibility for them, can never fail to bring the most poignant self-condemnation.

Such was the mental condition of Jean Lafitte after the revelation made to him by Greloire.

He had, up to this moment, considered himself deeply aggrieved by Bonaparte's apparent neglect; and, looking at the matter from the standpoint of youth, his ardent, impulsive nature, and his unstinted love for the young officer, his feelings were not without warrant.

But, in the light of Greloire's explanation, the man of thirty could well see how unreasonable and hasty had been the boy of fifteen; how unthinking and rash; how utterly lacking in a proper appreciation of Bonaparte's regard, and of how the manifestation of this was subject to conditions and influences beyond the latter's power to always control.

Not only did Lafitte see this, but there came also a mental picture of the honorable life — the splendid career

he might have led, and the substantial rewards he would have gathered, had he but placed greater confidence in Bonaparte, and waited for him to show his affection in his own way, and at his own time. He recalled the names of those who had risen to position and power under the consulate and empire, and thought how readily his own might have been included upon this glorious roll of honor. He thought how splendid would have been such a career, even though it ended upon the field, in the service of his emperor, and of France; and how history might possibly have written his own name upon the page illumined by that of Napoleon.

Then he contrasted this with his actual life during the past fifteen years, and realized how poor it had been in purpose and achievement — how worthless in worthy results. He thought of the perils through which he had passed, none of them incurred for the sake of honor, but most of them for gain alone; of the lawlessness which had marked so much of his active life; of those who had been his associates in it.

True it was that he had achieved a name; but to the world it was one of reproach, and put aside only by the few who knew him as a man.

Such was the trend of Lafitte's thoughts that night, long after he sought his cabin aboard the "Condor." He reviewed his life, as it was now presented to him, and compared it with what it might have been since he left Toulon; and, with this introspection, there came innumerable incidents and details which long had slumbered in his brain.

He thought of Margot, and her words returned to him — when, upon that last evening of her life, she had said that Bonaparte was his good angel, and Laro his evil one.

Truly had her words been proven; for now he knew the former as he was, and would have been, while the passing years had either increased, or made more apparent Laro's coarseness and cruelty.

It was only to the boy Jean that he had ever been otherwise; but latterly something of a change had taken place in this respect toward the man, especially after he had refused to acquiesce in the adventurer's cherished scheme that he, Jean Lafitte, should take as his wife, Lazalie, the former's niece.

Surely the girl was beautiful, with a lithe, tigerish grace of form, smooth olive skin, and burnished blue-black hair shadowing a low brow, beneath which sparkled black eyes that told her uncle's lieutenant all too plainly of the place he held in her heart.

But the young man had, all through his wild life, held within the innermost depths of his soul a sacred shrine, kept closed and pure, where never the love for woman had entered. Over its altar, faded and indistinct, yet cherished as something white, above the blackness of his life, lingered the teachings of his foster-mother, and the remembrance of a sunny-faced, blue-eyed girl, who had promised the boy to pray that he might be that which he had so woefully failed to be, or had even sought to attain.

The past rolled in upon him like a smothering flood, until, in a wild tumult of despair, he left his cabin and went on deck. There he heard one of the watch whistling to himself; and presently the man broke softly into the words of the air:

"C'est l'amour, l'amour, l'amour,
Qui fait la monde à la ronde!"

The song brought to mind again the blue-eyed girl's face, and also that of her daughter, the little "Island Rose," whom, late the previous May, he had piloted through the woods, and down the rivers, from her dead mother's home among the Choctaws.

The long, rough journey had given him rare opportunities for sounding the depths of the childish soul so close to Nature that it seemed to worship the mother's God through Nature, and Nature through God.

He was known to her as "Captain Jean," a friend of her grandfather, — as "Captain Jean," whom she found such a charming companion, and whom his escort of white men and Indians respected and loved. She trusted him fully, and their intercourse was free from restraint.

She talked to him of plants, and flowers, prattling wisely of their healing powers, and repeating the lore taught by her Indian friends. She sang to him songs learned from the mother of whom, when she found that the young man had known her, she delighted to speak. She had sung and talked to him until much of his hardness was melted for the time, as storm-clouds are dissipated by the happy rays of a newly risen sun.

Recalling her now, while he paced the deck, with the troubled waters of his soul casting ashore such woeful wreckage for his contemplation, the thought of her white purity, her silvery voice, her childish confidence, brought to him a blessed peace.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

ANIGHT had passed, and the island of Martinique lay drowsing in the sleepiness of mid-day. The sun—sole despot of the sky—had banished every cloud to beyond the horizon's limits, and now filled the pale blue sky with a glare that was metallic, as it shimmered down upon the sea, which stretched a brilliant surface to the far-off sky-line.

In Fort Royal bay, before the sleepy town, lay three ships at anchor. The one nearest shore was a brigantine, beautiful in model and French in build; she carried a long eighteen-pounder amidships, and her bulwarks were pierced for lighter guns. This was the "Black Petrel," and she displayed the American ensign, now hanging limp in the motionless air, as were the like colors shown by the "Condor," rocking near-by in the lazy tide.

On the latter's deck, as on that of the brigantine, no life showed. But on the English man-of-war that lay a short distance off, making, with the two other vessels, the three points of a triangle, the decks were spotted with scarlet coats, some in groups, and some by themselves.

Down in the luxuriously furnished cabin of the brigantine, Laro and Lafitte, seated, and in earnest conversation, paused occasionally to scrutinize this craft.

"Perhaps she means no mischief," muttered the former; "but the very flag she flies, and the red showing on her decks, are enough to set my teeth on edge."

He spoke in Spanish, and Lafitte replied in English, with a slight accent that indicated his foreign birth, —

"You say you heard ashore last evening, as did I, that she stopped only to fill her water butts, and is bound farther south?"

"Aye," growled the other man, taking the spyglass from the table and squinting through it at the obnoxious neighbor, while Lafitte drummed softly on the oaken table, a look of abstraction that came to his face suggesting that his interest in the matter might not be so great as was that of his companion.

The latter appeared to observe this, and with it the unusual moodiness of the younger man; for, laying down his glass, he asked, with an expression of concern softening his scowling face, "Jean, what ails you?"

"Why do you ask?" was Lafitte's impatient rejoinder, as he took the glass and began adjusting the sight.

"I ask because you and I have not sailed the seas together these fifteen years without my coming to know the color of the flag your mood flies," said Laro, pouring some spirits into a tumbler.

Lafitte laid down the glass, and laughed a little bitterly; but he made neither reply nor comment.

"Did old De Cazeneuve seem inclined to treat his granddaughter with kindness?" Laro inquired, after a short silence, and as if considering it wise to change the subject.

"Yes, for all I could see; and he is likely to do so while she makes no demand upon his gold."

Laro uttered an oath, and drained his glass.

"That man has been growing more and more miserly ever since his pretty daughter ran away with that cursed Englishman, and I have often thought it might have been money in my pocket if I had let Stanley's blood out of his veins the night of the governor's ball before he levanted with the girl. De Cazeneuve has, for a long time, seemed unwilling to risk much in the business, and yet demands old-time profits. I tell you, Jean, that if it were not for the hold he seems to have upon Governor Claiborne and all the aristocracy, and might turn traitor if I let go my grasp upon him, I would long ago have broken with such a parsimonious old rascal."

Jean let this pass without remark; but, as Laro replen-

ished his glass, the young man said, "If you are not careful you will get your brains as befogged as they were when I tried to talk with you this morning."

The tone emphasized the disgust shown in the curling of his clean-shaven lips.

But Laro laughed as he held up the glass, while his eyes rested on Lafitte's handsome profile, its usual sea-bronzing somewhat paled by his recent ten months ashore.

"Befogged, was I, my son? Yet not so much but that I recall every word you told me of what has happened since you left Lazalie and me on the Barra de Hierro, and went to play gentleman awhile in New Orleans. By the way, Jean," he added, as from an after thought, "that was an odd thing for you to do, — go off on a wild goose chase to the Florida wilds to bring De Cazeneuve's brat away from the Choctaws."

There was a smouldering anger in Lafitte's eyes as he turned them upon Laro's mocking face.

"I told you that the Indian runner, Bird-Wing, came from his tribe to Count de Cazeneuve, bringing a letter from Mrs. Stanley, imploring his forgiveness, as she was dying, and beseeching his protection for the daughter she must leave among the Indians. He asked for my services, and I gave them gladly, for his daughter's sake."

The tone was wonderfully soft, and the speaker's face held a light — perhaps of reminiscence — which evidently puzzled Laro, who, with a laugh in which was more of raillery than mirth, exclaimed, "*Madre de Dios!* This from you, who have ever shown such scorn for women!"

All abstraction fled from the dark eyes now turned upon Laro, and the scowl lowering over them was in no wise lessened as he added, "Ah, now I recall that night when you were a lad, and when you and she seemed to find each other's society so agreeable — the night I brought her from France, and we all lay snugly hidden in Thiel's stowaway, with the guns of Toulon singing their last tune."

Lafitte remained silent, looking steadily at Laro, who,

still in a mocking tone, asked, "Did you find her still such a charming demoiselle? I dare swear you did not, if there be truth in the reports that the Englishman left her long ago—left her to wear out her life among their red neighbors."

Lafitte rose and went over to the port-hole, turning his back as he answered, "I found her dead, with the Indians mourning for her as for one well loved. Her child, with her maid, Barbê, a French woman, I brought to the count."

"What is the child called, and how old said you she was?" Laro inquired, now in a more serious tone.

"She is fourteen, but such a pale little slip that she neither looks nor seems her age. She bears the same given name as her mother—Roselle; but the Indians called her 'Island Rose.' Their cabin was on a small island; and, in spite of their rude surroundings, the mother seems to have reared the child most carefully. The count has formally adopted her, and she is now known as Roselle de Cazeneuve."

Lafitte said this with dignified coldness, and as if wishing, by a full explanation, to dismiss the subject. But Laro would not have it so.

"Aha, Captain Jean," he said, resuming his bantering air as he poured more liquor into his glass, "only fourteen, you say; and yet very near an age of danger." Then, with an assumption of gravity, he added, "Take my advice, lad, and have a care how you talk in such a softened fashion of another woman when my Lazalie's pretty ears are close enough to overhear; for these brown-skinned beauties often find a way of ridding themselves of rivals, even though such rivals be but fourteen, and pale blossoms, at that. I know the blood running in my niece's veins; and I can count very surely upon what she would do if she found you giving to this pale-faced, Indian-bred flower that with which you never deigned to favor her own charming self."

At this Lafitte turned quickly from the port-hole, and

facing Laro, said sternly, "I have told you already, and I now repeat it, that, strange as it may seem, there is in me that which would make me never ask other than a true, good woman to unite her fate with mine; and to such a woman my life would be contamination. Have done, I say, talking to me of these things!"

He threw himself into a chair; and Laro eyed him curiously for a moment before he asked, "Jean, what devil of a mood possesses you this day?"

There was no reply, and he continued, "Do you know, boy, that for all the years we have faced dangers and reaped gold together I know naught of your beginning?"

This, said in a half indignant, half persuasive way, elicited no response; and the speaker, holding up his head and expanding his chest, added, with a mingling of reproach and pride, "If you 'll not tell me of yourself, I will tell you something to show you that the Laro you have known is of as good blood as any aristocrat of France."

"How so?" inquired Lafitte, as if more for the sake of peace than from any interest the matter had for him.

"It is in this way: The son of an Indian sachem was captured and sold into slavery by those cursed Puritans of New England; he was bought by a Spaniard, who adopted him as his son, and educated him in France. He married a Spanish lady of rank; and he was my father's great-grand sire."

He paused; but there was no remark from his auditor, and he added, "The English killed my grandsire, and after him my father, who were the original owners of the Barra de Hierro."

Still no word from Lafitte, whose thoughts were evidently far afield; and Laro, striking his fist upon the table, asked, "Now do you understand how readily I can bear to see the flow of blood, especially that of the English?"

"Yes," replied the young man, smiling mechanically, and passing a hand across his face, as if to brush away previous thoughts. "Well, I myself have no love for

the nation, although I've no Indian blood to color its hatred."

"But I will swear that yours is the blue blood of aristocracy," declared Laro, his eyes growing pertinaciously inquisitive.

"What matters it, yes or no?" said Lafitte, anger now showing in his face and voice. "What does it matter whether I am the son of a prince or of a *bourgeois*, — whether I am an aristocrat or a *sans-culotte*? To you I am, and have always been, Jean Lafitte, who is now your associate in various schemes on sea and land; and I am also of Lafitte Brothers, blacksmiths, of New Orleans. That is all I am — all I will be!"

A sharp retort was upon Laro's lips, to which the tumbler of spirits had been raised very frequently during the conversation; but Lafitte checked it by adding, in a business-like manner, "Speaking of Lafitte Brothers, I am reminded to ask you again if you will take my advice as to this present cargo of slaves. I tell you that the governor's recent proclamation will cause trouble, if you attempt to bring them to New Orleans at present. Pierre told me, only the day before I sailed, of some talk he overheard between Governor Claiborne himself and two gentlemen with him, when one of their coach horses cast a shoe, and they were delayed at the smithy while our men remedied the accident."

"Odd it is," said Laro, irrelevantly, "how content Pierre seems to be to linger ashore these two years, as master of a blacksmith shop, rather than be aboard ship, to meet adventure and gather gold, for which he had ever such a trusty and fearless trick. Odd, too, how he seems to have as little time to spare for ladies as have you yourself."

"But what say you as to the cargo?" broke in Lafitte, with manifest impatience, not a little of which arose from the continued filling and draining of Laro's glass.

"Oh, I say, as seems to me I am always saying now-days, that your idea is the right one," was the surly an-

swer. "We'll up sail at midnight, when we can reckon upon slipping away from under the nose of that infernal Britisher out there, and make for our own snugery, where Lazalie has, no doubt, been wondering at my being so long away. Once in the channel that brings us to the Barra de Hierro, and anchored before it, all the craft England can send would have hard work to get at us. We will take the niggers there for awhile, and turn them out on the Island, to work our crops, until Claiborne takes another nap, and forgets all about the recent agitation."

He had, while speaking, again picked up the spyglass, and focussed it upon the man-of-war, where nothing was changed among the red-coated loungers.

"Have you anything more to say to Jude?" inquired Lafitte, after a few moments' silence upon his part, while Laro was swearing at the enemy he was scanning.

"No," replied the latter, without taking the glass from his eye; "for, befogged as you thought me, I gave him his orders this morning, before I came aboard this craft."

"Very well," said Lafitte, paying no attention to Laro's covert defence of himself. "Then nothing remains to be done until night."

"Nothing," the other man assented; and Lafitte left him.

CHAPTER TWENTY

A MOTLEY combination of men and tongues was found in the crew of the "Black Petrel." Spanish and Portuguese predominated; but there were also French, English, and Americans, together with a few negroes, the latter being among the most brutal fighters when the brigantine's entire force was brought upon deck.

During the day, and by reason of the mistrusted English man-of-war, the crew, with the exception of such a number as might naturally be lounging about upon the most peaceful and respectable craft, kept hidden below, beguiling the time as individual taste prompted.

The sun was so low that it seemed to rest, a rayless globe, blood-hued, upon the melted sapphire of the far-off sea line, while the zenith was aglow with the tawny orange and honey of a tropical sunset.

The "Black Petrel's" gunner, Lopez, an old follower of Laro's, leaned against the taffrail, smoking, while he looked scowlingly at the English vessel, whose colors, now streaming in the freshening wind, flaunted, like a challenging signal, to those of the other craft.

Near Lopez lounged Garonne, mate of the "Black Petrel," a heavily built, brutal-faced Portuguese, as swarthy as his companion. In the ears of both men were massive rings of gold, and nothing in the garb of either marked any distinction of rank.

Some distance forward, leaning against the bulwark, his arms folded, and his stolid face turned toward the sinking sun, was the statuesque form of Ehewah, the only Indian aboard — a young sub-chief of the Muyscas tribe, inhabiting an island of the southern seas.

He was too far from the other men to overhear their talk, which would have been scarcely intelligible to him, as they were speaking in a patois of their own tongue.

"I have been watching him, and I tell you the dog is not to be trusted," the gunner was saying. "A few years since the captain would have seen for himself, and without any warning to sharpen his wits. But Laro seems nowadays to have no eyes save for his rum; and this, if he has not a care, will lead us all into some infernal trap, where we may feel the rope around our necks."

"Have a care, Lopez," said his companion sternly, "that you get not the taste of another rope first, upon your bare back, for showing disrespect to your captain."

"You have been over-free with that sort of rope already; and this lies at the bottom of what I thought it my duty to warn you against," was the surly retort. "An Indian never forgets the hurt he never forgives; and forgiving is something an Indian would scorn as we would scorn cowardice."

Garonne, with an oath, asked what he meant.

"I mean to recall what may have slipped your memory, as it is more than filled with such things. But I will stake all the silver and gold that fell to my share from the fight three weeks ago with the Spanish brig, that Ehewah will never forget the splicing to the main-mast you gave him for stealing your ruby. Every blow of the rope's-end awoke a dozen devils in his heart; and these will, sooner or later, make a merry hell for you, and perhaps for all of us."

Garonne, whose look of scowling anger had changed to one of sneering scorn, uttered a burst of vile profanity, and striking the taffrail with a broad fist, brown as mahogany, exclaimed roughly, "Let me hear no more such talk from you, Lopez; old messmates as we are, you are going a bit too far. You prate like some old housewife in her dotage. Any showing of what you hint would make the Indian food for sharks; and any more such grumblings

from you may lead me to forget old friendship, so far as making the captain look beyond his rum, and see his gunner spliced to the main-mast for a flogging."

Lopez, with an angry snarl, straightened himself, and turning away, saw Lafitte coming toward him. Garonne also saw the latter, and advancing, said, "No sign yet, captain, of a visiting boat from over there," indicating with his thumb the man-of-war.

Lafitte nodded a careless recognition of the mate's remark, and passed on to Lopez, who had again faced seaward, his pipe held in his hand out of deference to his superior, whom he had already saluted.

"I had thought that when the cool came the Englishman might have tried to board us, for an interview," the young man remarked in the kindly tone his men knew as well as they did the coldly imperious one that never failed to hold in check the most lawless amongst them.

"Much better they keep away," said Lopez slowly, in the English tongue — one he spoke but imperfectly. "Much better, sir; but to me it the surer shows that we are watched."

"Well," said Lafitte, still looking at the vessel, "let them watch their fill, while the daylight gives them the chance. At midnight the wind will be of a sort the 'Black Petrel' needs, and we will give them a cleared patch of sea to watch when the light comes again."

Then he asked, "What were you and Garonne quarrelling over as I came up?"

Lopez scowled, and, although he knew that the dark eyes, which no sign of disquietude ever escaped, were bent searchingly upon his face, he was silent.

"What was it, I say?" repeated Lafitte, now speaking somewhat sharply. "I know that you rarely lose your temper; and, as you know, I never permit quarrelling amongst ourselves, for it is sure to breed trouble."

Lopez glanced about and saw that Garonne and the Indian had disappeared. Then, turning his eyes to Lafitte,

he answered in a lowered voice, "Do not think I am becoming soft-hearted, my captain, that I have to say I fear Garonne make harm for all, by bastinadoing a Muycas like white man sailor. This I was telling him, and, *Madre de Dios!* — it turned him to threaten to have me bastinadoed for speaking."

Lafitte questioned the old man closely, and drew from him the full cause of his foreboding.

The "Black Petrel" had — as Lafitte knew already from Laro — some three weeks before encountered a richly laden Spanish brig, bound for a West Indian port. A fierce fight had ended in victory for the brigantine, after which the prize was burned, and the survivors of its crew set adrift in open boats.

There were twenty slaves aboard, together with a rich cargo, and in the latter were found a number of uncut gems, from which the Indian had been suspected of stealing a large ruby, awarded to Garonne as part of his share of the plunder. Ehewah, upon being accused, refused to admit or deny the theft, and Laro, contrary to his usual custom, had left the Indian to be dealt with as his accuser saw fit.

Garonne, whose natural brutality had been increased by generous imbibings of spirits taken from the despoiled vessel, was not content with inflicting ordinary punishment for such an offence, but had for several days in succession, caused the Indian to be stripped, tied to the mast, and flogged unmercifully, after which he was treated with unsparing severity by the mate, whose cruelty was — tacitly, at least — approved by Laro, notwithstanding the fact that Ehewah had been treated by him as a favorite since the time he saved his captain's life by killing a deadly serpent that had crawled into the latter's sleeping place.

"Ehewah's back bears scars that only revenge will heal," declared Lopez in conclusion, and now speaking in his own tongue. "He has been changed ever since. No man ever had a kinder care or softer touch for a mate who

was sick, or hurt, as I have to remember from the time, two years ago, when I was laid up with a cracked head, at Tobagga. But now he glares like a wild-cat when one of us crosses his way, and he has not spoken ten words since he was bastinadoed."

Lafitte's only comment was to bid Lopez keep silence upon the subject, and to have a watchful eye upon Ehewah.

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

ALMOST midnight, with a south-sou'-west wind that was all the "Black Petrel" could desire for a speedy filling of her sails, now being set to carry her farther northward, to a safe retreat — the island known to Laro and his followers as the "Barra de Hierro."

Fort Royal and its harbor were silent as the desert of sea, the sound of which, rolling in upon the shingle, was all that broke — and this but faintly — the silence under the velvet-like sky, where the Southern Cross stood out from the planets and lesser stars, scattered like spangles and gold-dust over the deep purple of the ether.

In such a scene earth seems at peace, and Heaven closer. Yet, shut down in the hold of the "Black Petrel," was a very hell of suffering, where the slaves taken from the Spanish brig were brooding over their wretched fate, and thinking of the kindred from whom they had been torn, to go — they knew not where ; while above them, in the semi-darkness, their later captors moved rapidly about, working with a celerity evincing familiarity with stealthy flights from threatening dangers.

Aloft, on the lookout, was Lafitte, his mind in much the same turmoil as during the night before, after his meeting with Greloire.

He loathed his surroundings and associates as keenly as would a man of higher calling and gentler deeds ; more, perhaps, for his nature was a mingling of passionate extremes. His faults had made possible his present environments ; and the knowledge of this brought with it a storm of fierce remorse which a more conventional mind would have been incapable of feeling.

The first years of his life with Laro, passed mainly along the Barbary coast, were the darkest to review. Later, as manhood came, and he had risen to power as a leader, there had been, upon his part, less of violence and bloodshed, while he had more than once brought upon himself Laro's censure or scorn for being what the latter termed "white-livered;" in other words, for showing mercy to the vanquished, and insisting upon adherence to a code which left some shreds of honor and self-respect.

This had — and almost unconsciously to himself — been increasing during the past few years; and, like a current of pure air through the foulness of a cavern, its influence had been felt by some of the men under him — those who, while lawless enough to wrest a living from the world, retained a lingering regard for decency and fair-play.

So it had come to pass that the men — several hundred in all — who had formerly looked upon Laro and Lafitte as one, knowing scarcely any distinction between them in the matter of leadership, were divided into two factions, — one, a lawless, conscienceless mass of brutes, who never thought beyond the hour, who regarded as proper prey all men who possessed more than themselves, and to whom blood-spilling for the attainment of selfish ends was a sort of natural law. The other, while equally defiant of all laws made by God or man, retained a certain regard for the rights of others, provided this did not involve too much self-sacrifice; and they were opposed to the spilling of blood, save in actual conflict.

Yet both factions were one in love for Lafitte, and in growing impatience with Laro, whose uncertain moods were marked by unexpected and unreasonable outbreaks, such as might come from a lunatic, or wild beast.

More and more, during the past five years, Lafitte had sought to keep himself and his own faction to themselves, on their island stronghold in the gulf of Barataria. But his interests, as well as the interests of those whose personal agent he was, were too much entangled with Laro's to

make possible their separation, even had he sought to bring this about.

Up in the lookout, rocked as in a cradle under the stars, with the night wind souging in the rigging as the brigantine cut through the waves, leaving a flashing of white to mingle with the gleaming phosphorescence of the dark water, Lafitte now recalled that long-gone night when, after meeting Laro in the streets of Toulon, the boy Jean had set a seal upon the past; and a smile, half-pitying, half-scornful, touched his brooding face, as if the boy had been another, and not himself.

Nearly two years of life under the care of Père Huot had been passed in sullen indifference outwardly, but resentful impatience within. From time to time the contents of letters received by the priest from friends in Paris had been read or repeated to the boy, who was thus kept informed as to Bonaparte's doings: but the latter had not written to him, nor to Père Huot, since leaving the lad in the priest's charge. He had gone to perform the duty set for him by the committee, and afterwards joined the army in Italy, whence he had been summoned to Paris for consultation with the authorities as to a new form of government: and then came the Directory, with himself at its head.

News of him was always that of his increasing influence and power; and this, together with his marriage with the lovely Creole, Madame Josephine Beauharnais, had made the boy's thoughts all the more bitter, there having come a feeling that memory of him or thought of his welfare must be crowded out from the heart and mind of the man from whom he had hungered to hear.

"He has forgotten me!" he had cried to himself, with a mingling of sorrow and indignation. "All France loves him now. Why should he care for me?"

The night when Père Huot lay dead, Jean, wandering aimlessly about the streets, met the tempter, but just arrived from New Orleans. Three days later the "Aigle"

left the harbor of Toulon; and with it went Jean, and his faithful adherent in right or wrong — his foster-brother Pierre.

"What matter if it be what he would not approve?" the boy had asked himself angrily, as he watched the sparkling breadth of sunny sea widening between himself and France. "What matter now? He is too great to think of me, or care what becomes of me. But I, too, will become great, in my own way!"

And now, at this eleventh hour, he had come to know that he had not been forgotten. Amid all the adulation of France, in all the increasing wonder of his power and greatness, the heart a boyish resentment had ignorantly stamped underfoot had been faithful to the lonely lad whom Bonaparte supposed was abiding, by his wish, at Toulon.

For a moment his despair awoke the impulse to let himself fall into the sea, and so end it all; for the theatrical strain of his French ancestry was strong in his veins. But his life in America had already taught him much of its people's philosophy; and another self seemed to separate from the despairing one, and ask if it were not better to live down evil, rather than be overcome by it.

Yet what was he to do, other than he was doing, chained as he was to a past that made the responsibilities of the present?

At last he shook himself together impatiently, realizing that present duty demanded his keeping a sharp lookout for the enemy, and retaining a clear head, in case of pursuit; for he knew that Laro, having persisted in heavy potations, was now sleeping heavily in his bunk, and would be incapable of assuming responsibility, should occasion call for it before morning.

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

THE day was coming, gray and heavy-looking, with a misty cloud-bank in the east promising fog later on. Overhead, the pale dawn was extinguishing the stars above the sea that stretched, a dull-green floor, in every direction.

Lafitte, asleep in his cabin, was aroused by a knocking upon the door; and, to his instant query, Garonne's voice replied, with a suggestion of satisfaction in its gruff tone, "She is after us, sir, sure enough."

"Where away?" demanded Lafitte, when he had admitted the mate, and was making himself ready to go on deck. Laro was already there, for he could be heard shouting to his men.

"Heap up the shot, Lopez!" he roared. "Heap them knee-high, I say; for that cursed Britisher shall swallow them by the wholesale if she comes meddling here!"

"Where away, I say?" Lafitte repeated, with a note of sternness, as Garonne, instead of answering, had paused in the doorway, and was looking intently over his shoulder at something in the main cabin.

"Three points on the starboard bow, sir," the mate now hastened to say, with an apologetic gesture. "She is not yet to be made out clearly; but the lookout reports her as very like the man-of-war we left in Fort Royal last night."

Lafitte scowled, while he moved about hastily, looking and acting but little like a man who could have been possessed of such a mood as had been his own, at midnight.

When he came from his room he found Garonne, who had left him a few minutes before, still standing in the

outer cabin, and looking around keenly, as if something were amiss.

Lafitte questioned him, and he replied that when entering the former's cabin he had seen the Indian, Ehewah, glide from that of Laro, and disappear hastily, as though not wishing to be observed.

Lafitte laughed lightly.

"If he was in there while you were knocking at my door, Garonne, he would scarcely, unless he has suddenly become deaf, fail to realize that he would surely be seen coming out. What cause for suspicion can lie in his coming here? You know well that he is in the habit of doing so, and that Captain Laro permits it."

Garonne growled something under his breath — doubtless profanity; but this was suppressed, as Lafitte seldom failed to emphasize his disapproval of such language in his presence.

"Have you a positive reason for suspecting anything wrong from Ehewah's being here now?" he demanded sternly.

"Only that he has not been coming about here of late," said Garonne sulkily.

"Has he been forbidden to do so?" was Lafitte's next question; and Garonne admitted that he had not.

Then Lafitte, dismissing the subject, went above, followed by the mate, who, as the former had long known, was about the only man among his followers who had, in secret, but little liking for him.

The sun had lifted above the horizon, but its rays were dulled by the low-lying cloudiness stretching away across the zenith from end to end, as would a gray wall. To the southward the sky was clear; and defined against it like a phantom ship that seemed to be sailing toward the "Black Petrel," was a large craft which, growing more and more distinct, appeared to have fresher wind than that now partially filling the brigantine's sails.

Laro, standing beside Lafitte, as they both watched her, muttered a curse.

"She is getting the benefit of what we have had and left, in the way of breeze. But we'll trust the devil to foul her hereabouts, and help us to better wind farther along, although I am of half a mind to let her catch us, if that be her intention; and then, if she tarries to ask impertinent questions, give her a good dose of iron."

"Better keep away, and mind our own matters, unless she has the wish, and gets the chance, to interfere with us," replied Lafitte moodily.

Both men were silent for a while, as they watched the stranger drawing nearer. Then there came a noticeable softening of Laro's face as he turned suddenly to Lafitte, and laying a hand on his shoulder, said, in a tone which caused the dark eyes to turn from the approaching ship and rest wonderingly upon the speaker, "Jean, lad, dost remember the old days, when we first met at Le Chien Heureux, where I taught thee to sing 'As tides that flow — as winds that blow'? *Madre de Dios* — but thou wert a boy to make any man's heart hold thee close, as mine has done all these years. And I wonder — aye, oft do I wonder, has my love of thee brought thee to lasting evil? I have been rough with thee, lad, at times; aye, surely I have of late. But my love for thee is the same this day as it has ever been. Never doubt that, Jean, my lad, whatever befalls!"

Startled at the manifestation of such a mood in Laro — one, too, which so accorded with his own recent feelings, Lafitte looked at him with a silence due to amazement.

"I had a strange dream last night, Jean," continued Laro, in a tone curiously unlike his usual one; "a dream I feel is meant as a warning. I told you yesterday of the Indian blood in my veins; and so you can better understand the dream, and what it means to me, for it comes only to those of my race whose end is near. But I have no fear, and care nothing as to how my end comes — whether it be by shot, shell, or the sword."

He stood more erect as he said this, and spoke with an air of braggadocio.

"But somehow it has stirred old times to light, Jean — this dream of mine," he added, relapsing into the odd softness of look and voice.

"Rouse yourself, Laro, — what has come to you?" said Lafitte sharply; for he was beginning to wonder if this were anything more than a new phase of maudlin excitement.

But Laro remained silent, his eyes fixed upon the deck.

"What is this dream, which seems to have affected you so powerfully?" presently inquired Lafitte, thinking that perhaps it might be better to humor Laro than to show disrespect for his peculiar mood.

The broad brown hand went again to rest upon Lafitte's shoulder; and Laro looked off over the sea with eyes which seemed for the moment to have lost all interest in the approaching vessel.

"It was this, my lad: I sat at a table heaped with fruits and wines; and about me was such as makes the heart of man glad to be alive. But suddenly there came a flash of lightning, with an awful peal of thunder; and looking out upon a portico near me, I saw a form clad like an Indian warrior, riding a horse black as the gates of hell. Straight up the steps of the portico the steed galloped, and into the room, where it circled around the table, until the warrior drew his bow and let fly an arrow that struck my glass, and sent the wine, blood-red, pouring over me and my guests in a stream which grew, and grew, until it was a red river flowing over the table, and washing it away; and I awoke, shivering, to see Ehewah standing by my bunk, telling me that a craft was in sight which looked like the Englishman."

Laro's bearing, so changed and softened, no less than the dream he had related, made Lafitte feel at a loss what to say. He could not deny that the recital had affected him strangely, seeming to bring him into closer touch with

Laro as the latter added, "I have always known that to dream of this Indian and his black horse means death to one of my family."

The pressure of his hand grew heavier upon Lafitte's shoulder, and he raised his eyes, now filled with a softer expression than the young man had ever seen them hold.

"Jean, my lad, if anything happens to me, you will always take care of Lazalie? Even though you have no love to give the girl, you will let no harm come to her?"

The sound of her name brought Lafitte to his proper senses; and the perplexed look vanished from his face as he exclaimed, "*Mon Dieu*, Laro — what nonsense are you talking? You, to be so upset by a mere dream! Drop all thought of it, and give your mind to more important matters; for if we are to reach the Barra de Hierro this night we must put aside such unsubstantial things as dreams, and keep a lookout for the Englishman."

The stranger was surely drawing nearer, and the past twenty minutes had brought her close enough to be made out distinctly. She was, beyond doubt, a man-of-war, and presumably the same that had been the brigantine's neighbor in Fort Royal harbor.

"Have you the gun in prime order, Lopez?" asked Lafitte, who now came and stood beside the old gunner. "Ah, that you have, I see," he added with a smile, after glancing at it, now divested of its tarpaulin covering, "and I look to you for its proper handling, should occasion arise."

Lopez, who stood with his assistants clustered around him, replied with a grin, "Never you fear, my captain, but that the gun and myself will give a proper account of ourselves."

There now came a shout from aloft, the lookout announcing that the approaching vessel was the Englishman, and that she seemed to be preparing for action.

"Curse the wind — why won't it hold with us?" muttered Garonne, standing near the group about the gun; and

Lafitte noted the gleam of hatred that, for a second, made Ehewah's face fiendish as he glanced at the speaker.

"Wind or no wind," returned Lopez, in a growl, "we are taking our own course; and if yonder gentlemen trouble us, their own fault it will be if burnt fingers they get for meddling."

"Stand by to take in the stun'sails!" the voice of Laro broke in. The captain seemed to have recovered fully from his recent mood, and to have forgotten the dream that inspired it.

"Lively, you dogs!" he shouted. "Lively, there; and if that craft wants to overhaul us, let her make the trial."

The "Black Petrel" now changed her course, and the other vessel did the same, this indicating that she intended to give chase. But the brigantine was by far the better sailer; and, had Laro chosen to run southward, he might have escaped.

This, however, would have carried the "Black Petrel" away from her proposed destination, a thing that Lafitte, no less than Laro, scorned to permit, especially as the pursuer was of a nation hated by both of them. They were therefore of one mind in the determination not to submit to personal inconvenience on account of the Englishman.

The latter drew still closer as the day wore on, when a little after noon, the fog-bank, which had been promised at sunrise, rolled in over the sea, enveloping pursuer and pursued as in the folds of a heavy blanket.

Lafitte was for keeping straight to their course; but Laro, with sulky persistence, claimed that their better plan would be to anchor. He knew that early the next morning — should the fog lift by sunset — he could reckon upon reaching the channel flowing inward to the Barra de Hierro; and, although its bars and reefs, while familiar to himself and his men, guarded a course the stranger could not follow in safety, he did not care to risk pointing out the way to his island retreat.

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

AN hour before sunset the fog rolled up, revealing the man-of-war anchored near enough for the men on her deck to be seen plainly without the aid of a glass. They showed like spots of flame to those aboard the brigantine; and the slants of the sinking sun reflected bright scintillations where they touched the brass of the cannon.

The anchors of both vessels were raised at once, and the chase was renewed, with the pursuer not a mile away, and heading about southwest, which would soon bring her within range of the brigantine, whose course lay due west.

A curl of smoke soon rose from the Englishman's deck, and a few seconds later there came the report of a gun.

"A pressing invitation for us to show our colors," remarked Lafitte, as he watched the shot strike the water. "Up with the flag of Carthagen," he added, turning from the rail, and now speaking to the boatswain.

"No," replied Laro, with a roar of anger. "No — *Madre de Dios!* It is my own flag they shall see."

Up to the brigantine's peak ran a compact ball. The knot was drawn, and a flag fluttered to the breeze coming in a freshened puff, over the water.

The flag was black; and its field showed two crossed sabres, their whiteness emphasized by the sable background.

The Englishman now fired again, the shot falling about midway between the two vessels; but the brigantine, still not answering, kept on her course.

A short time passed, with the "Black Petrel's" crew uneasy, and Lopez swearing softly in his native tongue; for Lafitte's counsel had prevailed with Laro, and the latter was waiting. The pursuer then began a more persistent firing with her bow-guns, but none of the shots reached their mark.

Presently Lafitte, who was standing near Lopez, asked quietly, "How would a shot work now? Try, and see."

The old gunner, with a shout due to his long repressed feelings, set about levelling his gun, calculated the distance, and obtained the proper elevation. Then, taking the match from Shapira, his assistant, he waited until his eye struck the right point aboard the Englishman.

There was a report, soon followed by a trembling of the enemy's spars; and the brigantine's crew crowded to see the result, while the scowling face of Lopez broadened with a grim smile as he saw the English sailors rushing up the fore-shrouds.

"You have struck their foremast, just below the futtocks," announced Lafitte, looking through his glass.

"Aye, sir; and I will sing them another such sweet song," said Lopez coolly, watching his men reload the gun.

The enemy had meantime come a little closer, and was dropping shot viciously about the brigantine.

"Lopez, make haste with the gun!" cried Laro, with an oath. "Give them a dose such as will set them to repairing damages."

Although as yet no man had been killed aboard the "Black Petrel," nor any seriously wounded, several bloody faces and arms were showing, where splinters of wood had left their mark.

"Keep a sharp lookout, Garonne, that she gets not too near," growled Laro, who was jealously watching the Englishman. "Keep her dancing about us; and" — turning to the crew — "should she get close enough to try any tricks with grappling-irons, have the cutlasses ready, my hearties. And remember that it is no quarter."



A sound, half roar, half snarl, came from the men; and the next moment there was a whistling amongst them as a cannon-ball struck the bulwark in front of Larò, filling the air with bits of wood, and then glancing into the water.

A large, sharply pointed piece of ragged wood struck him in the side, and with a cursing cry he sank, face downward, upon the deck, the blood from his wounds spattering those nearest him, several of whom had been hit by the flying splinters.

Lafitte sprang forward, and placing his arms around the quivering form, turned the distorted face to the air. Then, looking up at the gunner, who was staring wildly at the sight, he cried, "Fire, Lopez, as you never fired before!"

A prompt discharge followed the order, and a wild shout of joy went up from the crew of the "Black Petrel."

The enemy's foremast was again struck, this time with disastrous effect, as could be readily seen; for her crew were getting the sails off with all possible speed. Her fore-royal and top-gallant sails were clewed up, and the topsail-yard let go by the run, while the mast was swaying perceptibly.

Her firing had ceased. Yet Lopez, paying no attention to this, sent another shot the moment his gun was reloaded, and, as the smoke cleared away, the Englishman's foremast was seen going over the side, taking with it the top-gallant mast and jib-boom.

Another chorus of yells arose from the brigantine, while the old gunner, calmly observing the result of his work, muttered, "That is what you get for meddling with the 'Black Petrel,' as has many another before you."

Meanwhile an evident excitement had been prevailing among the live cargo beneath the hatches. And, now that the noise and distraction on deck had subsided, and the senses of the participants were absorbed by immediate surroundings, shrill, though stifled cries came from below.

Garonne was one of the first to hear them, and, growling profanity, he, accompanied by two of the crew, armed with

marlin-spikes, went down to quiet the wretched creatures, who had perhaps been hoping for rescue.

Laro, by Lafitte's command, had been borne to the main cabin, where he was laid upon a divan; and the brigantine had been ordered to come to anchor. The enemy had already done this, and, in her present crippled condition, there was nothing to fear from her, as the distance between the vessels was too great for advantageous firing, even had the Englishman been in proper form to continue the fight.

Lafitte was, of course, now in sole command; and seeing, from the appearance of sea and sky, that the fog would soon close down upon them again, he determined to slip away under its cover, and that of the night.

It took but a few moments to give his orders; and he then went below.

Laro was breathing heavily, in broken gasps; and beckoning to Lafitte, he asked to have sent away those who were about him, still striving to check the blood that flowed so freely as to soak the red of the divan until it showed black.

"They can do me no good, my lad," he panted; "and I want to speak with you."

Lafitte sent the others away, and sitting down by the dying man, took one of the hands that were already growing cold.

A curious complexity of emotions swayed him as he did this; for it is an awesome thing to face the presence of death, even though it be in the company of one for whom the heart has but scant affection or respect.

"Jean, you will take care of Lazalie?" And Laro's black eyes, their mockery forever slain, looked at him with appealing wistfulness.

Lafitte nodded, and pressed the hand he held.

"I thought you would; for I have quarrelled with you too often for showing mercy to enemies, not to know the kindness of your heart."

Lafitte remained silent, and Laro waited a moment, as if gathering strength.

"She will have plenty of wealth, as you know; see that it is delivered to her safely, and kept securely afterwards. The 'Black Petrel' is yours, boy — all your own; Lazalie and the men know that. Take the girl away, Jean; take her to the nuns, in New Orleans, as I should have done before this; and do you and she have the church say masses for my soul. My soul!" he repeated, in a quick gasp. "To where will my soul go?"

As Lafitte's lips parted to speak, the dying man, as if divining what he might be about to say, cried with a sudden burst of strength, "No, no, boy; try to tell me no soothing lies! Living, I never knew fear; and dying I scorn it! Ah — *Madre de Dios!* Christ have mercy!"

And with this last cry, Laro's voice was stilled forever.

Lafitte's heart repeated the prayer, as he folded the dead man's hands across the broad chest; and scarcely had he done this when he was startled by the noise of a commotion above him.

Stopping only to draw a blanket over the face and form of the dead, he went on deck, where a number of excited men were gathered on the side toward the enemy. All of them were talking loudly and gesticulating, while they appeared to be looking at something below; and Lafitte, having joined them, demanded to know what had happened.

But his glance had already followed the direction of their eyes, and he saw one of the "Black Petrel's" smallest boats being rowed by the Indian, Ehewah, toward the English vessel; and clinging to it, while his hoarse voice poured forth a volley of menacing words, was Lopez.

Shapira, the assistant gunner, attempted to explain that the men had noticed nothing until Lopez, who was superintending the swabbing of his gun, rushed, shouting and cursing, across the deck and plunged into the sea.

Some of the crew thought he was attempting suicide, or had become crazy, and were getting a boat ready to

lower, when others, looking over the side, saw the Indian pulling away from the brigantine, with Lopez swimming in pursuit.

It now became evident that Ehewah had improved the moments of confusion, when the crew's attention was absorbed by the wounding of Laro and his removal below, to lower the boat, and, as Lopez doubtless surmised, with the intention of joining the enemy, with the intention of gaining their favor by betraying his former associates.

Lafitte stood by the side, perplexed for the moment as to what was best to do. It would be dangerous to risk firing at Ehewah, as this might injure Lopez; for although the old gunner himself could have been trusted to fire such a shot, no other man was likely to show the same accuracy. And, too, there was the chance that Lopez might, in some manner, prevent the Indian from carrying out his treacherous purpose.

But Garonne now came shouldering his way through the men, having just come from below. After a glance seaward, his eyes turned to Lafitte; then, with a copious flow of profanity, he sprang to the gun and began tearing away its partially arranged covering, at the same time shouting orders to Shapira. But the latter hung back, loath to risk harming his old comrade.

"Fire, Shapira, for it cannot harm Lopez!" ordered Lafitte. "Look for yourself."

Ehewah, still rowing swiftly, and paying no apparent heed to the gunner, had covered much of the distance between the brigantine and the man-of-war; and figures were gathered upon the latter's deck, watching the exciting scene.

Lopez had loosed one of his hands from the boat's gunwale, and drawing his knife, hurled it at the Indian; but Ehewah dodged, and it fell into the sea. He then rowed on, and Lopez, no longer shouting, attempted to draw himself over the stern of the boat.

At this, the Indian had stopped rowing, and struck the

gunner over the head with an oar, continuing the blows until Lopez released his hold and sank from sight, this being a moment before Lafitte had commanded the Jewish gunner to fire.

A roar as of angry wild beasts arose from the men on the brigantine; but it was lost in the louder roar of the gun, whose discharge, however, seemed to have in no wise affected the treacherous Indian.

A boat which had been lowered from the English ship was now seen pulling rapidly to where Ehewah, still pausing, appeared waiting for the gunner's body to rise.

This it soon did; and the Indian, showing an agile strength one would not have accredited to his slight frame, drew it into the boat.

The shot fired by Shapira had splashed into the water far from its mark; for the man's nervousness, together with Garonne's fuming and blasphemy, aggravated his lack of skill.

The crew of the brigantine saw Ehewah parley with the men from the enemy's vessel, after which he rowed in their company to the man-of-war; and Lafitte, watching through his glass, saw the form of Lopez carried aboard in their midst.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

LAFITTE, bidding Garonne accompany him, went below, to Laro's cabin, now shadowy with the approaching twilight.

Garonne lit the brass lamp swinging over the small table, and turned to Lafitte, who stood looking about him, as if for some sign of Ehewah's treacherous intentions, when the gleam of a gold band, hanging over Laro's bunk, caught their eyes.

It was a bracelet, which the Indian had always worn upon his naked arm since the day Laro placed it there, in a burst of gratitude to Ehewah for having saved his life. Attached to the band was a piece of pearly shell, carved in imitation of a human tooth, which was wont to repose upon Ehewah's breast, among other charms and amulets, attached to a gold chain.

Both Lafitte and Garonne knew enough of the Indian's tribe-lore to understand that this was Ehewah's mute announcement of ended friendship and loyalty.

"Treacherous dog," snarled the mate. "If only I had him here, to serve worse than before!"

"Had you been more merciful and just, we might not have this to deal with," said Lafitte severely, tossing the trinket upon the cabin table.

Garonne made no reply, but glared around with fury-filled eyes.

"Are you sure the Indian's hands were empty when you saw him come from here this morning?" inquired Lafitte, disregarding the mate's looks and manner.

"Yes, my captain, I am sure they were quite empty; for when he saw me, he started, and one hand went to his knife, as if he meant mischief."

"He doubtless stole in here to perform what to him was a religious rite, and having hung Laro's gift where we found it, went his way, intending to attempt that which he has now accomplished," mused Lafitte aloud.

Then, as if struck by an afterthought, he went to Laro's bunk, and throwing aside the rich draperies, disclosed a heavy wooden locker.

Its lid was, contrary to custom, unlocked; and when Lafitte opened it, a disarranged collection of papers and canvas bags showed within.

These he tossed and tumbled still more, in his search for something he evidently failed to find; for he rose and faced Garonne, who had been looking on.

"It is as I supposed — not a coin nor jewel touched, but charts and papers gone, that are of more importance than all the valuables. The rascal knows the way to the Barra de Hierro; and the charts he has taken will inform others, showing them where to find what now belongs to the Señorita Lazalie."

Garonne, forgetful of his usual restraint when in Lafitte's presence, now broke forth into a flood of curses, which the latter checked at once with, "Silence, sir! Pour out your blackguard temper as you will where I cannot hear; but alone with me, and here, with the dead so near us, I bid you hold your vile tongue, if it cannot speak words to which a gentleman may listen."

The mate turned to the cabin door, where he paused, and asked in a voice trembling with the anger he dared not show, "Have you any orders for me, my captain?"

"None, save to let the men have their supper at once, and see to it that only half-allowance of grog is served. The fog is coming in, and we will sail as soon as may be."

Like an army of shrouded ghosts, the fog was again about the "Black Petrel," enclosing her in a world where she was the sole tangible thing. But, as over a path familiar to blind eyes, the hands that manned her could shape an unerring course for their secure haven.

Long before midnight she was feeling her way north, toward the mouth of the treacherous channel that would bring the crew to their island stronghold, the Barra de Hierro.

The south-southeast wind, as if favoring their flight, blew softly, but steadily, tossing the mist over the faces and garments of the men, each one of whom — even Garonne — bore his part faithfully, and with entire loyalty to his commander.

The stars were paling, and the fog was gone, when the brigantine stole up the reef-beset channel leading to the safe harbor of the Barra de Hierro; and an hour later her anchor was cast before a low-lying mass of land that was still too distant for unfamiliar eyes to distinguish intelligently by the dim light.

The shore was formed by bare rocks that rose, a barricade of cliffs, from the seaward view; but, when approached by a small boat, these separated, to show numerous passages between themselves and the shingle of the island, where the smooth sands were lipped by curling breakers that washed unrestrainedly over the beautiful shells.

The early morning air was heavy with odors of aromatic shrubs growing beyond the beach, and the carol of wakening birds was filling it with music, when Lafitte came ashore, leaving Garonne in charge of the brigantine.

His course lay inland, at first over waste fields, and then cultivated ones, of sugar-cane, coffee, and tobacco. Then came some banana and fig plantations, interspersed with groves of palms and cocoanut trees, until, after a walk of twenty minutes, he reached a clearing, in which stood many small huts, evidently dwellings; and apart from these rose the walls of a stone building, surrounded by a high wall, with circular towers at the angles.

This had always been Laro's home and stronghold, as also that of his father and grandsire before him; and, with the small army of slaves kept upon the island, together with the sailors and other followers, who came and went

according to their leader's orders, such a place of refuge was in every way desirable, in case of pursuit, or in the event of sudden outbreaks among his own men, which had more than once made a few hours of unpleasant excitement — the natural sequence to the rough life led by them.

Lafitte crossed the open space, and stopping before a stout open door in the wall, called for admission. But there was no response; and, after a longer silence than suited his humor, he fell to striking upon the door, while he called still louder.

This resulted in its soon being opened cautiously, to show a stalwart giant, whose black face and naked arms showed all the darker by contrast with the white cotton of his raiment, draped in a barbaric fashion that told of its not having known thread and needle.

"My young captain!" he exclaimed in Spanish, a pleased surprise lighting his grave face; and catching Lafitte's hand, he kissed it as the latter replied, "Greetings to you, Ezrah. Is it all well here?"

"Yes, my young captain. All is well; but it will be more than well, now that you have returned."

Lafitte waited until the Arab (for such he was) had closed and barred the gate; and then, in a few words, he told him of what had taken place, adding that Laro's body would be brought ashore later in the day, for burial.

Ezrah listened with a face showing no emotion whatever, save perhaps that of anger that the nation his master had taught him to hate should have been the means of the former's death.

His young mistress, the Señorita Lazalie, was of course not yet awake; and Lafitte, after bidding the Arab to leave her undisturbed, went to his own apartments.

The building was constructed after the Moorish, rather than any other style of architecture, although it was designed for defence, more than for any pleasure it might give the eye. It was very spacious, and the rooms were scarcely more than comfortably furnished, except in La-

zalie's domain, where they were fitted up with a luxury befitting the abode of a princess.

And as such the orphaned Spanish beauty reigned over her uncle's followers and slaves.

She was now sixteen ; and, since leaving a convent school in Seville, two years before, her entire time had been passed upon the Barra de Hierro, to which Laro — her only living relative — had brought her, and where she had seemed fully contented with her luxurious and independent life.

He had surrounded her with everything which might minister to her pleasure. Her apartments were fitted with the choicest furnishings, paintings, and bric-à-brac, together with musical instruments of every description, upon many of which she was a skilful performer. She was (although caring little for reading) supplied with the best and most expensive books, and the latest available music was always at her command. The richest of fabrics went to make up her apparel, and the jewels with which she delighted to deck herself would have adorned the caskets of an empress. She had her own special slaves, of both sexes, subject absolutely to her will ; and these she treated kindly or cruelly, as the impulse or whim moved her, being responsible to no one for whatever severity she might see fit to exercise.

So lived the Señorita Lazalie, her only companion being the motherly Irish woman who had been the devoted nurse of her early childhood.

Laro, of necessity, passed much of his time away from the Barra de Hierro ; and, during his absence, Lazalie was its head and ruler, except when Lafitte found it necessary to visit the island. Then the Spanish girl gave place — and with entire willingness — to the man whom, from their first meeting, she had loved with all the fervor of her uncurbed nature.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

THE sun was nearly two hours high when Lafitte awoke from slumber, and prepared to make himself ready for the responsible and arduous duties lying before him.

An immense earthen jar, standing in his dressing-room and filled with fresh water, showed that some one, mindful of his needs, had stolen in to supply them while he slept. But, disregarding this, he passed out of the house and took the path leading to a near-by pool, set in a thick grove of mangoes, where the water was in continual agitation from the inpouring of several brooks, which, coming from the hills, tumbled in cascades over the rocks on one side and rushed away on the opposite side in a babbling torrent that ran — one of the many streams traversing the fertile island — into the sea.

Tossing his garments on the bank, Lafitte plunged in, the cool flood sprinkling with crystal drops his face and hair as the spray flew about him. Then he disappeared, to emerge like a water god, with gleaming white chest and arms, as a small negro showed himself, laden with towels and a change of raiment.

The boy, after depositing his burden upon a seat roughly hewn from a large ceiba tree, sat down to await further orders, while a tiny monkey that had followed him sprang to perch upon his shoulder, chattering and making faces at the bather in the pool beneath.

Presently, espying the heap of clothing, the animal made a dart at it, snatching at what had attracted his attention, and sprang to seize a vine of parasitical growth that, drooping from a ceiba tree, reached almost to the ground.

He caught it skilfully, and, still chattering, climbed swiftly to the far overhead branches, a pair of the bather's trousers trailing in his wake, and a fine linen shirt (caught in some way upon the other garment) showing like a retiring flag of truce.

Lafitte had not observed his antics until, with loud whoops, the little negro, springing to his feet, made a wild clutch at the vanishing apparel, and failing to catch it, stood, still shouting at the mischievous animal, who now, safely ensconced above, was attempting to array his small, hairy body in the proceeds of his raid.

He apparently knew something as to the nature of the garments, although he was not able to comprehend their precise use; for he drew the trousers about his neck and shoulders, evincing much discomfort when the buckles and other fastenings rasped unpleasantly against his skin. And, while chattering angrily at this, turning his head around as if seeking to ascertain what was amiss, he let fall the shirt, which went fluttering down upon the up-raised face of the irate little negro.

"Go after him, Nato; climb and catch him," Lafitte ordered, laughing in spite of his annoyance; and coming from the water, he picked up one of the towels.

The boy removed the linen muffler from his head and face, while he grumbled audibly. He was a Virginia darkey, whom Laro had purchased in New Orleans.

"He done be a debbil, Mars' Cap'n Jean; he done bite, effen yer try ter 'fere wid him. Lak 's not he done tar' yer breeches ter rags, effen he see me comin' arter him. Yo' Pete, yer brack debbil!"

His last remark, addressed to the monkey, was accompanied by a stone, to the throwing of which the animal paid no attention beyond looking down gravely and silently, as if reproaching his playmate for such unkindness.

"Never mind about all that. I tell you to go after him, and make him drop my breeches, even if you cannot catch him," said Lafitte, now rather impatiently. He

was partially dressed, and needed the remainder of his apparel.

Nato, with a sullen look, proceeded to obey, and catching the same vine used by the monkey, he went up hand over hand, his small form testing its strength but little more than had that of the former, until, reaching a crotch of the tree, he clambered into the branches, where the monkey sat, chattering vociferously, as if aware of the boy's design.

But now, with the evident intention of evading capture, he skipped to the extreme end of a limb; and during his rapid flight one of the trouser legs caught in a twig, stripping the garment from his body. It dangled a moment, and then fell to the ground, and Nato came down, leaving the monkey far out in the branches.

"Yer kin stay dar an' sw'ar yersef white in der face, fur all I cares," was the boy's parting objurgation, as, a few minutes later, he started to follow Lafitte to the house, where breakfast was ready, and the housekeeper, Bridget, was waiting to see the "young captain."

"Ma'am Brigida," as she was called, had been Lazalie's nurse since the latter's infancy; and it was her love for the girl that had brought her to the Barra de Hierro.

Although having little liking or respect for Laro, she had, at first, no suspicion as to the real nature of her surroundings. And while time and events had made her much wiser, she had, up to the present, seen no way to better her condition; nor had she the wish so to do, if this would part her from her young mistress.

She was wise enough to keep silent, and to refrain from interfering with matters outside her own particular jurisdiction. But many a wretched slave suffering from punishment could tell of the kind woman who came to him stealthily, bringing food and drink, or with cooling lotions and healing salves had dressed the weals made by the overseer's whip.

In Ezrah, the Arab, whom Laro had treated more as an

under-officer than as a slave, Bridget had ever a safe confidant and sympathetic abettor; and these two, like many another, while despising the "old captain," were ready to give their allegiance to the younger leader.

Lafitte breakfasted alone, attended by Ma'am Brigida, with Nato curled up in a corner, devouring the fruit or other food his master gave him occasionally, as to a favorite dog.

Of all the negro boys on the island, it was well known that Nato was Lafitte's favorite; and the little fellow's highest ambition was to attain sufficient growth and height to become the body servant and constant attendant of the only man, save Ezrah, who had never treated him with undeserved severity.

Ma'am Brigida had informed Lazalie of her uncle's death, as narrated to the former by Ezrah; and the girl had sent word to Lafitte that she would see him later in the forenoon.

When he had breakfasted, Lafitte told Ma'am Brigida and Ezrah of Ehewah's treachery, and what might be expected by reason of it.

He had during the night, while the "Black Petrel" was speeding away from her crippled enemy, reviewed the situation, and laid out a programme of what the English would probably attempt, including in his calculations an estimate of the time it would take them to repair damages and then reach the island. He also had formulated what was to be done as to preparations for flight, and for the saving of such property as could be removed to New Orleans or Barataria.

In view of Laro's dying request, he had considered carefully all the arrangements for Lazalie's immediate future, which included that of Ma'am Brigida; and this he unfolded to the latter, after sending Ezrah to superintend the gathering of such stores as were to be taken to the shore, preparatory to putting them aboard the "Black Petrel" and another craft, which was to sail under command of Ezrah,

who, in addition to his other valuable attainments, was a skilful navigator.

Still another vessel, which completed the trio now anchored off the Barra de Hierro, was to be manned by all the roughest of Laro's followers, — those in accord with his ideas and practices; and, under command of Garonne, was to sail by a roundabout course to Fort Royal, in order to notify the former's confederates of what had happened, and leave them to tell Jude, when the "Condor" should touch there upon her return. They were also to inform such others as, according to custom, put in to Martinique before continuing north to their most frequented stronghold.

As to the slaves, of whom there were several hundred, it was not prudent to attempt taking them in a body to Louisiana; and Lafitte decided to, for the present, leave by far the greater number of them upon the island, where there was abundant food and shelter, and take with him only a few, including such as Lazalie should select for her own.

"Poor things! And it's surely a good day that's come for them!" declared Ma'am Brigida, when he informed her of this. "Sure, I've no love meself for the English; but they 're not the sort to belave in fettering and b'ating a fellow man, like a dumb baste, jist because his face is black by the saints' will."

Lafitte smiled good-naturedly, but said nothing; and, thus assured of his indulgence, she continued, "Holy Mother! But it sames like an answer to the prayers I've been sending up this many a day and night, that I could get me darlin' and self away from all this, and back again where I could hear a church bell ring, and seek counsel of a holy father, in case of need. But, Captain Jean, dear, think ye that she'll agree to be sint away to the Sisters at New Orleans, as ye have planned, and abide there? And where will yourself be all the time, to be sure?"

There was more to this, and in Ma'am Brigida's way of saying it, than appeared in the words themselves; for, that her nursling's heart was given to Lafitte had long been known to the faithful soul, who had feared, especially of late, that it was a love in no way reciprocated or desired.

"It is difficult for me to say," he replied in answer to her direct question. "My life must be as circumstances require; and it is no life for the Señorita Lazalie. As to that, neither is this island the place I should have selected for her, had she been under my own care. But now there has come a change; and it is not only possible, but necessary, that she and you go from here to such surroundings as are proper for her and you. Her fortune will be placed in safe hands; and she will soon be able, under the protection I can command for her in New Orleans, to live as she pleases, for she has abundant wealth."

He paused, as if considering something, and then added, "You must tell this to her in your own way, and say that to-night we must set sail for New Orleans."

Ma'am Brigida stared at him with an expression that caused him to ask, "You hear—you understand?"

"Yes, I hear," she replied, in a tone suggestive of something more that might be said.

"Well," he asked a little impatiently.

"And I understand, too, Captain Jean. I understand that if it's yourself that's to be taken out of her life entirely, her heart will break."

"Hold your tongue!" he commanded angrily, to add with a shrug, as he checked himself, "You probably are mistaken, as I hope is the case; for any person would be foolish to waste thought upon me. Go at once, and tell your mistress what I have planned for her safety, for we have no time to waste. She must be ready to leave the island this very night. Tell her also that I shall be pleased to do all in my power to assist her in her preparations."

He did not see the look Ma'am Brigida bestowed upon him as she passed through the doorway, for he had thrown himself into a chair, and was beholding a face, hearing a voice far away, — a childish face, and a gentle voice that had said, when he left little Roselle at her grandfather's door, "I shall never forget you, Captain Jean."

Pure, and so infinitely apart from his lawless life and its environments, the Island Rose, and his thoughts of her, seemed like a calm star shining in a heaven of blameless living which his inner nature longed to assimilate.

A rustle of draperies, a stealing of perfume like that of jessamine flowers, a pair of soft arms thrown about his neck, and a rain of passionate kisses on his face and head, — these roused him quickly, as a rich voice, broken by tears, cried, "Jean, my own Jean, what is this I have been told? You will cast me off, now that I am alone in the world!"

He tried to rise, and to unclasp the arms clinging to him so closely that it was difficult for him to disengage them without risk of hurting her.

Still clinging to him, she threw her supple form across his knees.

"You have been so long, so long away, and I was so glad you had come back to me! Ah, Jean, will you not know how dearly I love you? I would follow you to death if you would but say that you love me in return!"

Jean Lafitte was a man, and possessed a man's nature. But there was scarce an added throb to his heart-beats as he looked down into the beautiful face. Its glorious eyes, brilliant coloring, and full crimson lips affected him with a sudden loathing, while he felt the velvety arms around his neck.

He yet had the arrogance of youth; and this gave severity to his judgment, making him fail to consider her girlishness and inexperience, her ignorance of conventionalities, or to make excuses for her impetuous, untrained nature.

"Speak!" she cried, showering kisses upon his clothing. "Are you dumb, that you will not answer me? Then I will draw the words from your lips!" And pulling his head down, she kissed him.

At this, gripping her white arms with unconscious force, he tore them from his neck, and pushed her from him as he rose to his feet.

"Are you insane, Señorita Lazalie?" he asked, in a tone whose coldness caused her to shiver, as she stood like a criminal before a judge.

"You are unnerved by what has come to you, and do not know what you are saying," he continued, in a low, even voice that affected her like an icy torrent rushing into a tropical stream. "I will be your friend; and you must believe that you have my sympathy, and my wish to be of all possible service to you."

She showed no recognition of his offer, but remained silent, with drooping head and heaving breast.

"Forget what you have said, as shall I, and let us be friends," he added, still calmly, but with kindness. "Let us work together, for there is much to be done. Remember," he said finally, in answer to a questioning look in the face she now raised to him, "we must sail this night for New Orleans, or the English may make us prisoners, and deal out such insults to you as I might be unable to prevent."

She made no reply, but turned and left the room.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

TWO stories of the building were above ground ; how many there were below was known definitely to no one save Lafitte, Lazalie, and Ma'am Brigida. Ezraah and a few of the sub-officers knew something of the vaults and passages ; but they were ignorant of the treasure concealed there, — its bulk, value, and location.

Lafitte, not wishing the Arab to obtain more accurate knowledge, proceeded, with the Irishwoman's help, to empty the chests and pack their contents for removal.

When he threw back their covers, one after the other, the lantern held by Ma'am Brigida flashed its light over piles of rich stuffs, and ingots of gold, together with a great quantity of jewelry and unset gems, each sort in a separate compartment of its own.

Diamonds, white as steel, and clear as running water ; diamonds, blue and yellow, scintillated and blazed in the rays of the light held above them by Ma'am Brigida's trembling hand, while the woman gazed, wellnigh aghast, at such a show of amassed splendor.

Then there were rubies, blood-red, rose-red, and lilac ; turquoises, blue as summer's clear sky, and emeralds, green as the grassy fields beneath ; opals, some of them large as nutmegs, and of all colors, from pearl-gray to black, and glowing with the heart of a fiery sunset ; sapphires, green and red, as well as blue ; sea-green beryls ; topazes, pale and golden, orange and citron-hued ; pearls of various sizes, shapes, and tints, singly or in long ropes, — these and many other jewels, lying in heaps of sparkling color.

"The saints keep us !" exclaimed Ma'am Brigida, when she was able to speak. "Little did I think all these days

here that I was walkin' an' livin' above such splendor as no king or quane could match!"

"Have a care that no one knows of it now," warned Lafitte. He was in shirt-sleeves, working as might any sailor of his crews, breathing hard as he filled bag after bag, and swathed it in disguising wrappings of coarse sacking. "All this is now the Señorita Lazalie's, and I will leave it in safe-keeping for her, while she is with the nuns, in New Orleans. But," he added, as if to anticipate what Ma'am Brigida might say, "you understand that if afterwards there is any need of my advice or assistance you have only to let me know."

These words, however, conciliatory though they were, served to arouse Ma'am Brigida's inherited combativeness, for she asked, with considerable show of the indignation she had manifested earlier in the day, "And how are we to do that,—we shut up with the nuns, an' niver knowin' where you are, at all at all?"

Her manner had, during the latter portion of the forenoon, been undeniably chilly, from which Lafitte surmised that she had found cause for resentment against him by reason of the manner or appearance of her young mistress after the latter's interview with him.

It could have been from no more definite knowledge than this; for he was sure that Lazalie's fierce pride would never permit her to tell even her faithful old nurse of his having repulsed her proffered love.

"I shall arrange all that, and have it understood, before I leave you," was his curt reply, as he went on tying knots; and nothing more was said.

The chests were soon emptied, and the bundles lying ready for removal.

Early in the afternoon the entire crew came ashore with the body of their dead captain; and all on the island were given a half-holiday, in order that they might show respect to its interment.

Rolled in blankets, in lieu of coffin, it was lowered into a

grave made by the slaves during the morning; and all stood around in silence as the earth fell to it, shovelled in by those who had toiled beneath cruelties ordered or inflicted by the brain and hands now stilled forever.

Lazalie was not present; and Lafitte saw her no more until evening, when, with high-held head and scornful air, she joined him and the others at the table, to partake of the last meal that would be eaten on the Barra de Hierro.

In the midst of it they were startled by the sudden appearance in their midst of a bedraggled and weary form. It was that of the gunner, Lopez, who, still wet from the sea, and his garments torn by the thickets through which he had pushed his way, dropped silently into a chair, seemingly too worn out for speech. His face was white, and a bandage enveloped his head.

It was as Lafitte had supposed and contemplated. Ehewah, by help of the charts he had stolen, had gained the enemy's favor; and the latter, in consequence of the information furnished by the Indian, had lost no time in repairing damages, and setting sail in pursuit of the brigantine.

They were now lying off the east coast of the island, preferring to wait until morning before venturing through the treacherous channel to the opposite side of the Barra de Hierro, where they believed their prey, resting in fancied security, could be more easily overcome by an unexpected attack.

Lopez, feigning to be more severely injured than was the fact, had thus disarmed their vigilance, and, seizing an opportunity to drop overboard, had swum ashore.

He told all this by piecemeal, in answer to Lafitte's questions; and the latter then sent him out with one of his fellows to change his wet clothing.

When he returned, after a short absence, many ministering hands were busied in supplying him with food and drink, while Lafitte, in the fewest possible words, told him of the plan afoot.

He had reason to believe, from the man's record, that, like himself, Lopez was largely the creature of circumstances, and that he retained a spirit of humanity and manliness greatly at variance with his lawless life. Lafitte had long known him, for he had been a member of the "Aigle's" crew; and boyish associations gave him a more than ordinary place in the former's regard and confidence.

The large room where were gathered those who were to sail that night, was full of dusky shadows, relieved here and there by lights that streamed a quivering glow upon swarthy faces and stalwart forms, amid which Lazalie, with her rich beauty, and the honest homeliness of Ma'am Brigida, made a marked contrast; but, on account of the prevailing excitement and confusion, there was but little ceremony observed between the members of the household and those who dwelt outside.

There was general rejoicing over Lopez' escape. But this feeling was, in a measure, tempered by anger at Ehewah's treachery; and hard indeed would have been the Indian's fate could any of those sinewy hands have grasped his brown throat.

When the gunner's story was ended, a half-suppressed roar had surged through the room, to be hushed by the uplifted hand and reproving frown of Lafitte; for Lazalie had not yet left the table, but sat, with Ma'am Brigida beside her, at its farthest end. Her red lips were parted slightly, and an angry light glowed in her black eyes.

"Why did you fail to kill the Indian?" she demanded imperiously, as if holding Lopez accountable for a grave offence.

"Kill him?" repeated the old gunner, whose hand was carrying to his mouth a huge piece of turtle meat. "Kill him, Señorita Lazalie?"

"Yes," was her haughty reply. "You should have killed him."

"How was I to do that?" he asked with a scowl, as if feeling the unjustness of her accusation. "I had wasted

my knife on the traitor, and it now lies somewhere off Satan's Key; my powder and pistols were sea-soaked; and he took good care to keep out of reach, after I came to my senses aboard the English ship."

"I understand," she said, now in a more gracious tone; "and we are very glad you escaped. But," she added, "what could have happened, that Ehewah should think of committing such an act of treachery?"

The girl spoke musingly, her eyes bent upon the mahogany table, where, with a golden spoon whose handle gleamed with tiny gems, she was idly tracing an invisible figure.

Lafitte caught Lopez' eye; and, obeying the command he saw in the former's look, the gunner made no reply.

Lazalie appeared to have forgotten her question, for she remained silent, and in a few minutes went to her own apartments, followed by Ma'am Brigida.

The meal was soon finished; and then the men gathered from the table the gold and silver plate, packing it into canvas bags, which were borne to the shore, to be taken aboard the "Black Petrel."

The greater part of the slaves, together with those brought from the brigantine to be turned loose among their sable fellows, were, of course, ignorant as to the plans of their owner; and when they retired for the night, it was to slumber but little less deeply by reason of their brief respite from labor, while the new arrivals, half sick from their long imprisonment, with its darkness and poor air, slept far more soundly.

But, the next morning, the former, awakening in affright at the lateness of the hour, and wondering why no overseer's lash had roused them long before, soon realized that something unusual had befallen; for the sun was not two hours high when a compact body of scarlet uniforms and shining guns was seen advancing from the island's shore.

The greater number of the frightened slaves fled inland, to hide in the thickets and gullies. But some of the more

intelligent sought the shelter of the stone stronghold; and, finding it deserted, they quickly shut and barred the oaken gate.

It was not long before a storm of blows upon the gate called some of them to it; and, looking through a loophole, they saw the strangers gathered behind a commanding officer who was demanding entrance in the king's name.

The terrified slaves—a few of whom understood the words—lost no time in obeying, and were soon assured that no harm would come to them from the invaders, whose leader, upon questioning the negroes, was made aware of the condition of affairs.

Meanwhile, northerly sailed the “Black Petrel,” with Lafitte in command, and with him Lopez and a picked crew,—such men as he knew had his own cause at heart.

This northerly course from the Barra de Hierro was fully as dangerous as was the channel leading in from east to west; but as it was comparatively unknown to Ehewah, and not upon the charts stolen by him, Lafitte concluded there was little risk of encountering the enemy therein.

Lazalie and Ma'am Brigida, together with Nato and two other slaves to wait upon the Spanish girl, also were on the brigantine; and Ezrah, in charge of the sloop, followed as closely as possible, both vessels being laden with stores, slaves, and treasure.

Garonne, with his ship, had sailed at sunset, taking the northerly channel; but it was several hours later when the “Black Petrel” and her companion stole away, and took their course for New Orleans.

The wind blew from the south and southwest during the night, and by sunrise it had freshened to quite a lively gale, bearing a touch of sou'east, so that the brigantine was making a steady seven knots; and Lafitte, leaning on the rail, could see through his glass the sail of the sloop, which Ezrah was keeping upon a true, if slower course, while all about the waste of tumbling sky-rimmed waters there was no other vessel in sight.

It was noon when the "Black Petrel" reached New Orleans; and Lafitte came ashore immediately, bringing with him Lazalie and Ma'am Brigida, whom he escorted to their new abiding-place.

No others left the brigantine, as its commander's sole business in the city was that of providing for the girl's immediate future, after which he proposed sailing at once for Barataria.

One of his most intimate friends was Philip La Roche, a man of middle age, and a banker of New Orleans. He was of fine family, of high social position, and a gentleman of the strictest honor.

It was to his care that Lafitte committed Lazalie, after seeing her quartered safely, in company with Ma'am Brigida, at the Ursuline convent in the Place d'Armes.

He had purposed leaving Nato with them for a time; but the mother superior's evident disinclination as to this, coupled with the boy's passionate pleading to go with his master, led the latter to abandon his intention.

Lazalie had, during the voyage, preserved an air of calmness to which was added an occasional touch of scorn; but when, while they were alone, Lafitte bade her adieu, she put out a detaining hand, as she stood with downcast eyes before him.

Her sombre garments, with the hood of her cloak pushed back, revealing the dishevelled hair, gave her the look of a suffering saint; and Lafitte, who now saw her thus for the first time, had never thought the gayly plumaged tropical bird could appear so spiritual.

"When am I to see you again?" she asked in a listless tone.

"That I cannot now say; but the mother superior will know how to communicate with me, if I am needed," he answered gently, taking the two small, tremulous hands she extended.

"And may I not return to the Barra de Hierro later on, —after a while?" she inquired, with a humility which surprised him.

"It would be most imprudent for you to do so for some time to come, if ever, as you must surely know," he replied firmly, looking down into her face. "The English must have seized the island, and will doubtless hold it; and, as Laro's next of kin, you can scarcely hope for success, should you assert a claim to it as owner. But why wish to go back, when you are in safety here, with a fortune which will insure you perfect independence? What more can you ask?"

He was somewhat impatient at the thought of her seeming to care for such surroundings, failing, as he did, to remember that the island was the only home she had ever known. He failed also to realize that the rigid atmosphere of the place to which he had brought her was already stirring a homesick longing for the freedom of her former life.

"I ask your love, and I want to be with you!" she exclaimed impetuously, snatching her hands away and throwing her arms around his neck, while with a sobbing cry she laid her head against his breast.

Lafitte's face hardened as his fingers closed about her wrists and loosened her arms.

"That can never be, Lazalie — never. I have never known anything of love, and have no desire to learn of it now. I am not worth any woman's loving; nor can I afford to have any woman's fate linked with mine. Believe this, and accept it, and let us part friends."

She turned from him, covering her face with her hands.

"Mr. Philip La Roche will call upon you in a day or two. He is one whom you can trust, and with whom you can advise safely; and I shall place your affairs in his hands."

Lafitte had moved toward the door; and, turning at the threshold, he added, "Adios, Lazalie; and believe me when I say that if you ever need my service as a friend, you may count upon me."

She did not reply; and when she uncovered her face he was gone.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

THE island of Grande Terre, off the coast of Louisiana, runs parallel with the mainland; and at its western end is a secure harbor, reached by the Great Pass of Barataria, whose water is from nine to ten feet in depth.

It was a comparatively easy matter for any good mariner to sail as far as the eastern point of this island. But beyond Grande Terre, and when the Gulf of Barataria was reached, a different condition of things existed, making Lafitte's stronghold at the opposite end very difficult of access.

The harbor of Grande Terre communicated with numerous lagoons, bayous, and lakes, natural and artificial, many of them leading into the Mississippi, and forming a labyrinth of tortuous watercourses flowing between sizable islands, upon which the sea-rovers were as completely at home as were their law-abiding fellows when within the limits of New Orleans.

Here, on Grande Terre, were sold the captured cargoes and prizes; and people from all parts of Louisiana came hither to purchase them, with no apparent attempt or desire to conceal the object of their mission. Even in the streets of New Orleans traders gave and received orders for the purchase of goods at Grande Terre, doing it with as little secrecy as would be employed regarding sales of merchandise in the markets of any other city.

In New Orleans, as in other southern cities, it was customary for many of the wealthier citizens to disappear in the early spring, and remain away until late in the fall; and among these was Count de Cazeneuve, who took with him the greater part of his household. But it was not

generally known that he went to one of the Barataria islands; and the few who were aware of the fact found it wise to keep silent upon the matter.

The sun was so low that its reddening glow lay over the water, turning it to a gold-covered floor; and still Lafitte had not returned to the "Black Petrel," which bore no sign of life upon her decks, but lay apparently deserted, with scarcely a breath of air ruffling the flag at her peak.

Jean Lafitte was, with Pierre, sitting in the dining-room of his own house, of which, however, the latter was nominal master.

It was at the northeast corner of Bourbon and St. Philip streets; and not far away, between Bourbon and Dauphin streets, was the shop where Pierre pursued — ostensibly, at least — the peaceful vocation of a blacksmith, doing it in a manner enabling him to keep well informed as to all matters relating in any wise to the mutual interests of himself and his foster-brother.

"And so Laro is dead, and the Barra de Hierro in English hands," Pierre was saying.

He had heard Jean's story, and now, stretching his long legs, lay back more comfortably in his chair, where he had been listening with a rigid pose that told of his interest in the subject.

"Laro dead!" he continued meditatively. "May the merciful saints rest his wicked soul! Only," in a more practical tone, "I fear they will be forced to use a very strong spy-glass in order to find it."

Jean made no reply, being occupied with lighting a cigar.

"Now, lad," Pierre went on, in the tongue they generally used when alone with one another, "what is there in all this that should make thee look so sad? It was a bad day for both of us when we became mixed up in Laro's life and ways; as much thou hast more than once admitted to me. But for a long time thou hast been virtually thine own master, with views and schemes of thine own;

and, now that Laro is removed, it but makes it easier to carry these into effect."

"Aye," was the quickly spoken assent. "But it may be too late for such a thing."

Pierre's sleepy eyes opened wider as he looked across the table at his foster-brother.

"Too late, I say," Jean repeated, his voice vibrant with the feeling which had possessed him since the meeting with Greloire. "What wouldst thou say, Pierre, if I assured thee that I am heart-sick at thought of my life — what it must mean and be; and that I would forfeit all my wealth if but that we could be set back to that night in Toulon when we stood beside Père Huot's death-bed?"

Pierre straightened himself in his chair and looked wonderingly into Jean's agitated face, while the latter, not waiting for reply or comment, poured forth in rapid words, ringing with passionate remorse, an account of his meeting with Greloire; but with its ending his voice became tremulous, and rising to his feet he began pacing the floor.

There was silence, while Pierre seemed to be reviewing what he had heard. Then he said, while a gentle look softened the ruggedness of his face, "He loved thee, Jean, most truly; and ah, lad, how truly does he hold, as always, thine innermost heart!"

Jean's lip curled in a sneer as he stopped abruptly and threw himself into his chair.

"A fine showing I have made of what such love was strong enough to keep me from doing! I have made of myself a man whose whole life's devotion would count for nothing with him to whom the world now bends the knee."

"He is no saint," asserted Pierre, now with a growl, and as if determined to defend Jean against self-recrimination. "The world says he is selfish and hard — that he has ever sought his own aggrandizement."

"Dare not breathe to me one word against him!" exclaimed Jean, striking his fist upon the table. "Let others

say what they will, but I wish to hear none of it; nor will you, if you love me."

Pierre lay back in his chair, lit a fresh cigar, and smoked in silence, not ill-pleased to have changed his foster-brother's self-condemnatory mood into one of impatience with himself.

"Forgive me, Pierre, I meant not to speak so rudely!" Jean exclaimed the next moment, all trace of anger gone from him.

"Let it go, then, as will I," replied Pierre, with perfect good-nature. "Now tell me of thy plans, and what is to become of the lovely *Señorita Lazalie*."

At this, Jean, putting aside his former mood, sketched out clearly all his intended operations, telling in detail of his interview with Philip La Roche, who with his widowed sister, Madame Riefêt, would take the Spanish beauty into their charge.

It was now some two months since the governor's edict had been issued against the introduction of African slaves; and he had followed this by an address "To all whom it might concern in the territory," stating that it had come to his knowledge that well-laid plans existed to defeat and evade this edict by way of Barataria; and, as Jean now learned from Pierre, a rumor was afloat that the governor contemplated setting a price upon the head of Jean Lafitte, smuggler, slave-trader, and pirate.

"If this should come to pass, Pierre, New Orleans would scarcely be the safest place for thee," said Jean. "It is evident that the city is getting ready for a spasm of virtue; and with a goodly bribe in sight, there can be no telling how soon a brother of mine might be suspected, and laid by the heels."

"It is only a rumor as yet," answered Pierre, with no sign of anxiety; "and, together with the stories of bad feeling growing between these states and England, it gives the people a little of the excitement they ever seem to crave. No," now more emphatically, "I will not be-

lieve it; for there are hundreds of friends and well-wishers throughout Louisiana, to say naught of thy rich patrons, who enjoy the governor's confidence, and have good reasons for not desiring any curtailment of thy liberty or operations."

"I wish there would be war declared against Great Britain!" declared Jean, with sudden animation, as he nodded his acquiescence in Pierre's reasoning. "She has been sneaking around this country ever since her whipping here, trying, without appearing to try, to obtain another hold upon it. She pretended to swallow her former dose with proper grace; but this was pretence, for the dose has, even yet, lost none of its first bitterness. She never seems to really know when she is well thrashed."

It was now Pierre's turn to nod.

"If war came," continued Jean, his eyes sparkling as if with satisfaction at the idea, "do you know I think I should go to the governor and offer all I have for his assistance?"

"Ah?" said Pierre, with a slight elevation of his heavy eyebrows.

"Yes; for you and I, with our men, could then fight like any respectable citizens in defence of this country against the English."

"That might be," was Pierre's speculative remark. But his tone changed as he added, bending his eyes, filled with a meaning look, upon Jean's impassioned face, aglow with a new and better enthusiasm, "And England hates Bonaparte."

"Hates — yes; but fears, as well. Oh, if I can but help lay low his most hated enemy, I shall feel, in dying for it, the greatest happiness I ever knew."

Pierre whistled softly, and reaching for a flagon of wine, filled two glasses.

"Here, Jean," he said, lifting one of them, "let us drink to the overthrow of English power in any land wherein we may abide, and long life and prosperity to him you love."

CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT

TWILIGHT was coming when Jean Lafitte took his way to the house of Count de Cazeneuve, who, as the former had learned from Pierre, was now returned to the city. To him must be reported the recent events; and Lafitte had reason to suspect that the news of Laro's death would not be altogether unwelcome, inasmuch as for two years past the relations between the adventurer and the fastidious Frenchman had been greatly strained.

To New Orleans at large Lafitte was known as "Captain Jean," ship-owner, man of affairs, and benefactor of all worthy projects and persons, — one whose generous hand was ever open to the needy, black or white, who sought his assistance or advice. And many a kindly and admiring glance was cast at him, as, clad in white duck, with his handsome head and face shadowed by the broad brim of a Panama hat, his graceful, athletic figure swung leisurely along the streets, where, with the sunset, life was awakening from the afternoon siesta.

Up the avenue of live-oaks, upon whose branches the gray moss draped filaments looking ghostly in the twilight, he passed to the pillared portico of the count's residence, and, as was his privilege, entered its wide door unannounced.

The low strumming of a guitar coming from a near-by room drew his footsteps toward it, and he was soon standing on its threshold.

No candles were lit, but a woman's white drapery gleamed from the farther end, in an alcove-windowed

recess looking out to the western sky, where the evening sky was glittering in the day's gray ashes.

A curious sensation thrilled the man's heart as he heard a girl's voice singing softly —

The swallows dart on happy wings ;
With spring the earth is fair ;
Forgotten now in joy it brings
Are winter's days of care.
But sad my heart, that was so light
When winter's ice and snow
Held mute the song of waters bright
That now so gladly flow.

'T was love that made my world so fair
Without the birds and bloom ;
Love made the days of winter wear
Sunshine through all their gloom.
But now the sun of love is set ;
The blue sea parts us wide.
With tears my longing eyes are wet
That look where love has died.

It was the Island Rose ; and the song was one her mother had taught her, — one Lafitte had heard the girl sing during their journey from the Choctaw country.

"Mademoiselle Rose," he said, speaking very softly, as the sweet voice died away, breathing the final words like a sigh from a breaking heart.

He advanced into the room as she came toward him.

"Who is it — what do you wish?" she inquired timidly, and not a little startled.

"It is I, mademoiselle. Do you not remember me?"

"Ah!"

It was a cry of joy ; and two small hands, white as her snowy draperies, were held out to him.

"It is my Captain Jean. And oh, how glad I am to see you!"

"Are you?" was all he was able to say in reply, as he took her hands, and wondering to himself for being so tongue-tied in the presence of this mere child.

"Surely I am. So often have I asked myself during this long summer where you were and what doing. Oh, Captain Jean, I am so very glad you have come back. And now you will stop in New Orleans?"

She spoke eagerly, fearlessly, as if happy in showing her liking for him.

"I fear not, ma'm'selle. I am here for a few hours only, on business, and came to see your grandfather."

Something in his reply seemed to chill the frankness of her mood and bearing, and she drew her hands from his clasp.

"He is somewhere about the house — my grandpère," she said, speaking slowly and in a constrained way. "I will go and find him, — tell him that you are here."

She moved toward the door, but he laid a light hand upon her shoulder.

"Stay, — wait a moment, for I wish to say a few words to you."

She paused, and stood before him in the dusk that made her face shadowy.

"You speak of the summer being long. Were you not happy, ma'm'selle?"

The question was not without reason; for, knowing as he did the repelling coldness of her grandfather's nature, Lafitte had, more than once, wondered as to her contentment amid these new surroundings.

She moved uneasily, and her head drooped; but she did not reply.

"Tell me, little Island Rose, were you not happy?" he asked again, taking her hand. "Remember that it was I who brought you here, — I, who loved and revered your mother. And I must feel the deepest regret to have been the means of bringing her child to unhappiness."

His words, together with the caressing tone of his voice, brought a return of her former manner; and he could see a smile in the face raised to his, as she said, "No, I have not been unhappy, Captain Jean; yet I have often looked

back to the old free life, and to our journey together, which was so pleasant. And," hesitating a little, "you were so kind that I almost forgot my first grief — that of parting from my darling mother."

Lafitte felt her hand tremble, and there was a quaver in the childish voice.

"Is not your grandpère kind to you?" he asked, with a quiet persistency that recalled her thoughts to the present.

"Oh, yes," was her hasty reply. "He has been — means to be, very kind, I am sure. He has given me many pretty things — clothes, and jewels, and books — things of which I never knew before in all my life."

"Well?" asked Lafitte, as she stopped, for he felt that something was troubling her. "Be frank with me, child; tell me whether or not your life is happy."

"It is, Captain Jean; and yet there are so many things I do not understand. And I have a fear of my grandpère which I cannot overcome. Then, too, he insists that I shall be known as Mademoiselle de Cazeneuve, for he told me he would not have my father's name spoken under his roof."

"And does this make you unhappy?"

"Oh, no. I was too young when my father left us — my mother and myself — to remember much about him. But I know he made my mother very unhappy; and so I cannot regret to be called as was my mother before he brought her so much misery."

"Yet, little Rose, I feel that something is troubling you," Lafitte declared confidently. "I wish you would tell me what it is; and perhaps I can find the way to make you as happy and contented as I want to feel you are in this new home to which I brought you."

His voice, with its gentle insistence; the firm pressure of his hand upon her small fingers, — these impelled her, after a brief hesitancy, to say, speaking very softly, "There seems to be some mystery about my surroundings, — something in my grandpère's life I cannot under-

stand; and this makes me uncomfortable. And he has such strange associates."

It was well for both the girl and the man that the darkness hid the look of his face when he heard these words.

"On the island, where we spent the summer, such rough, dreadful-looking men came to see him, and then disappeared suddenly. I never spoke with them, for he bade me keep out of their way; but they frightened me, for they looked wicked and cruel, and many of them were as dark-skinned as our slaves. Some of them were dressed so oddly, with red caps on their heads, and rings in their ears. I could not but wonder why he should permit such men to enter his house, and what could be their business with him."

"There are many strange and rough-looking men about New Orleans, little Rose, and we are obliged to come into contact with them in business matters," said Lafitte. "I know those of whom you speak, and I know they would never harm you." And he patted reassuringly the hand she had not offered to withdraw.

"But," he added, "you had better keep away from such men, as your grandpère bade you; for you must believe that he loves you, and knows what is best for you. Remember, too, that so long as I live you can rely upon me to keep you safe from whatever might harm you or make you unhappy."

"Ah, that is pleasant for me to hear and to know, Captain Jean," she replied, with childish frankness, releasing her hand and laying it on his arm. "But," now with some anxiety, "how can you ever be able to do much for me, should I need you? It is long since I have seen you, or known where you were; and now you tell me you are here but for a few hours, and will then go away again, I know not where."

Although seemingly "'twixt smiles and tears," she spoke with an arch naïveté that affected Lafitte most curiously.

"You know Zeney, the one called a witch, your grand-père's slave!" he inquired with apparent irrelevance.

"Yes, of course," answered Roselle, surprise showing in her voice. "She is a dreadful-looking old woman, with big black eyes. At first I was afraid of her, but now I am not, for she knew and loved my mother, and has talked to me of her."

"So? Well, that is quite as it should be. And now, little Rose," again taking her hand, "remember always what I say to you now: Should you ever wish to tell me anything, or need any service you think I can render, all you need do is to tell Zeney, and then allow three days to pass in which to see me or hear from me. Will you promise to do this?"

He bent toward her with an earnestness in his manner that caused her to wonder at the time and afterwards.

"Yes, I promise, and I thank you," she answered softly, and left him.

A few moments later the Count de Cazeneuve entered the room and greeted Lafitte with a cordiality he accorded to few men; but the Island Rose did not return.

CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE

AFTER the death of Laro a new and somewhat better order of things prevailed among the so-called "Pirates of the Gulf."

Now under the direct leadership of Lafitte alone, and with better opportunities for knowing his chivalrous nature, the larger body of them followed unquestioningly his more merciful and less lawless practices; and not a few of the men actually relished the changed conditions in which they found themselves.

Boat-building was carried on by them upon a secluded island of the Baratania region; smuggled cargoes were disposed of at Grande Terre and New Orleans, or taken abroad; and there was, in addition to this, a legitimate business transacted, both in importing and exporting.

Lafitte now spent much of his time on Shell Island, where was his own particular stronghold, and upon whose shores was plied the trade of boat-building.

Yet his days were not all given to this peaceful occupation. Not only were there cargoes to be sold, and others acquired for his ships, but large quantities of goods had to be carried through the innumerable bayous and lakes with which he and his men alone were familiar, and brought in safety to his numerous clients.

It is difficult at this day to realize the power of Lafitte, or to understand the immunity, and the reason for it, with which he carried on his illicit pursuits. But it should be borne in mind that the Gulf of Baratania and its surroundings were in almost a state of nature and sparsely inhabited; that, by reason of the streams and swamps, the country was exceedingly difficult to traverse, except by

those who were cognizant of its mysteries; and that these were known to but few besides Lafitte and his men.

The former was its actual ruler; and, with his skill in managing others and his exact knowledge of localities and persons, he was able to administer affairs in a way to conserve his own interests.

He had an admirable system of communication between the more important points, by means of which he was able to keep informed of secret negotiations, to counteract intrigue, and to blind the keen-sighted.

There were certain points where his agents and spies concealed their reports, to be taken by him when it suited his convenience. And, through Pierre and other emissaries in New Orleans, he was always kept in touch with the drift of political and mercantile affairs.

Such was Lafitte's position during the two years succeeding Laro's death.

It is not necessary to give a detailed account of his operations. But it may be said,—as applying to this portion of his life,—that it was not easy to change the current of evil which a boy's recklessness and a young man's lawlessness had set flowing about him, more especially as his regret had not yet risen to assume the better and stronger force of resolve. He was fettered too closely by the interests of others, to dare, with his sense of honor,—mistaken though this might be,—to surmount his present entanglements, and declare his true self before the world.

Yet, with all his disregard for the laws of man, he still governed himself by a code inherited with his father's blood, and which held him to an observance of the law of honor and fair-play.

Quick to use force against force, he avoided all unnecessary violence; and, if his adversaries met with harm, it was for his and his followers' protection, and not from wantonness.

Once, when attacked by a posse of revenue officers

while he was carrying some valuable merchandise through the bayou Lafourche, to be delivered at New Orleans, he repulsed them speedily, and then apologized for the blood his men had shed, saying to the leader of his defeated foes, "I desire you to know that I am averse to such strifes; but, at the same time, you will please understand that I prefer to take life, or even to lose my own, rather than lose my goods."

Garonne, who had been given a vessel of his own, had gathered to himself the most unregenerate of Laro's followers, and entered upon a career in which he observed the same methods as his former commander, with the result that he was finally brought to execution, together with most of his crew, in a South American port.

Life at the Ursuline convent was, for many months, a burden to Lazalie, and her whims and caprices made it but little less so to the mother superior and nuns. But they, with a lively remembrance of many generous favors from Lafitte, felt that they must bear patiently with the charge he had left in their keeping.

La Roche, as her banker and man of business, came often to see his fair client, and ended by falling in love with her — a fact he was wise enough to keep to himself. And, later on, he obtained Lafitte's consent to her removal from the convent and taking a house of her own, where, with Ma'am Brigida and a retinue of slaves, the high-strung beauty seemed more contented.

Amid the turmoil of his life during this period, Lafitte had little time, save in thought, for anything aside from the immediate present — its interests and responsibilities. And of his thoughts, the happiest, as also the unhappiest, was of two faces that, at quiet moments of the day, or in the waking hours of night, rose, like stars, above the growing darkness of his life, and seemed to look down reproachfully upon him.

The one, a man's, with its pale serenity and magnetic gray eyes, commanding and irresistible; the other a

girl's, which seemed to bring with it the scents of the wild woods, and their freshness at the breaking dawn — a face with clear violet eyes, set wide apart under delicately arched brows, and free from affectation or tricks of expression as those of a child.

He wondered often what was to be her future — this little Island Rose? But a year or two more, and she would be a woman — in many ways she was one already. All about was a world unknown to her confiding purity, and, in many respects, more dangerous than had been that wild isolated life in her island home among the Choctaws.

And there was none to give her sympathy or counsel save her austere old grandfather, who had scarcely a thought beyond his miserly hoardings.

CHAPTER THIRTY

WHEN the summer of 1812 had brought the Cazeneau household to their Barataria home, there befell something which struck Lafitte with a new despair, and took from him all hope of ever being asked to render little Roselle the smallest service, even should the occasion or necessity arise.

Her childish trust in him became destroyed; he saw her shrink from him in terror and abhorrence. And this awakened in him the knowledge that the — as he supposed — paternal love he had been cherishing for the child of her who had always been his ideal, was not the affection of a father for his daughter, but the love of a man for a woman.

The bitterest potion he had ever swallowed was now working in his veins. Yet no one would have suspected this, as he went his way, and for a time with greater recklessness than before, although the rumor mentioned by Pierre had now become a fact, inasmuch as the Governor of Louisiana had issued a proclamation offering a reward for Lafitte's apprehension.

This had come about by reason of the *mêlée* in the bayou Lafourche, to which allusion has been made, and which proved to be the chip which kindled to a blaze the long-smouldering fire of wrath against the Baratarians.

When the information was brought to Lafitte, accompanied by a copy of the proclamation, he had, without delay, taken a pinnace and set out for the extreme southern side of Grande Terre, upon which was the Count de Cazenau's abode.

Several feeble expeditions had, before now, been sent against the so-called "outlaws." But, in this new and more forceful move, Lafitte saw something to be heeded; and his first thought was of De Cazeneau — of warning him in time, so that he might leave Grande Terre while he could do so in safety, and still retain his friendly relations with the governor and authorities.

The count's house was a low, wooden structure, with a puncheon-floored hallway, ten feet wide, passing through it, and open front and rear.

In front of the house was a wide gallery, reached by a flight of steps from the rankly growing sward, which extended to the gravelly beach of the bay, stretching to the south and southeast, and now lying blue and sparkling in the afternoon sunshine.

Beyond the house, at its back, and only a short distance away, rose the forest, wild and unbroken as nature made it.

At the sound of Lafitte's feet upon the steps, a woman's weazened face, wrinkled and scowling, its coffee-hue contrasting with wisps of gray, wiry wool showing from beneath a bright-colored bandanna, was projected from one of the numerous doors opening from the hallway into various rooms in the two wings of the building.

It was apparent that she recognized the visitor, for she came out into the hall and, despite her age, advanced briskly toward him.

"Ah, Zeney, there you are, looking as young as ever," was his smilingly spoken greeting.

"Always you say words, Captain Jean, that please, even when one knows they are not true."

He had addressed her in French, and she replied in the patois of that tongue used by the negroes of Louisiana.

Lafitte laughed lightly.

"Is your young mistress well?" he inquired.

"Yes, she is well," Zeney answered, in a tone implying that more might be said.

"Is she quite happy, Zeney?" A note of anxiety now

appeared in his voice, and he moved nearer to the small bent form of the old woman.

She shook her head vigorously.

"Happy? How could a wild bird be happy in a cage, even if its bars were made of gold?"

She was about to continue, but Lafitte, as if not caring to pursue the subject, asked, "Is your master here?"

Zeney nodded, and pointed to a closed door near them, "He is in there, and alone."

Lafitte, turning from her, knocked at the door, and De Cazeneuve's voice answered, "Entrez."

This the former did, leaving the door ajar.

Nato, now a tall, wiry lad of sixteen, and devoted, body and soul, to his master, was the only one to accompany him to Grande Terre. He had seated himself upon the steps, but too far away to catch the conversation between Lafitte and Zeney, even had they spoken in a language he understood.

But he watched them with curious eyes, having often heard of Zeney; and her reputed powers served to make her an object of awe and aversion to him, as to most of his class.

It was, therefore, with a sigh of relief that he saw her disappear, after his master had gone inside.

He remained sitting on the steps, his chin supported by two yellow palms, while a group of young negroes who had drawn near to gape curiously at him, after the manner of their kind, proceeded to converse in a way evidently intended to attract his attention.

"Does yer know why dere's white, an' brack, an' yaller men on dis yer earf?"

The question was propounded by a small, coal-black boy, plump and merry-faced, his head decked by the broad, drooping brim of a coarse straw hat whose missing crown exposed a generous crop of sable wool.

He was answered by a chorus of wondering negatives, while his companions drew closer, meantime sending fur-

tive glances toward the steps, as if to assure themselves that the stranger was being properly interested in their sayings and doings.

The first speaker kept his laughing eyes fixed upon Nato, as he said, drawing up his raggedly clad person with would-be impressive dignity, "Well, des yer lis'en all yer niggers, twill I tell 'bout it."

His auditors assumed a variety of positions, all of them more conducive to comfort than artistic effect, and the narrator continued:

"De fust an' onliest man in dis yer world were brack as tar, an' so was de t'ree sons he had; an' de sons was named Ham, Eggs, an' Bacon. Somebody done tole 'em —"

"How could somebody done tole 'em," a shrill voice broke in, "when dey an' deir daddy was all der people on der earf?"

"Shet up yer talkin', yer 'Gustus!" shouted the storyteller; and quiet having been restored, he resumed in a monotonous sing-song tone:

"As I tell yer, somebody done tole Ham, Bacon, an' Eggs 'bout er ribber, miles an' miles away, whar, if dey done went an' washed deirselves dey 'd turn white 's cl'ar milk from deir daddy's cows. Come ter t'ink 't was on'y Eggs got tole de fust; an' he kep' dat ar ter hissself, twill he went an' tried it. An' lawsey! He done come out on der bank sho'-nuff all white. Goin' home he met Bacon, an' tole him 'bout it. So den Bacon, he sot out ter do de same t'ing. W'en he come to der ribber, bress yer, chillun, does yer know dat ar ribber were so pow'ful low dat poor Bacon could n't on'y git hissef washed yaller — dess er pale yaller. Goin' home he done met Ham, an' done tole Ham all 'bout it. So Ham, he sot out, an' runned to de ribber. W'en he done got dar it were all dried up, desser lille bit o' water lef', — des' 'nough ter wet der pa'ms ob de han's an' soles ob de feets. An' dat 's de why dere 's white, 'n' yaller, 'n' brack men on dis yer earf."

Instinct, rather than any sound, had made Nato realize

that a presence was near him; and glancing over his shoulder, he saw a girlish, white-clad form standing in the doorway through which Lafitte had passed a few minutes before. Her back was toward him, so that he could see only the pink and white of one rounded cheek; and he marvelled at the length of two heavy braids of hair, glittering as if powdered with gold dust, that hung far below her slender waist.

Presently he saw one of her little hands go to her side, as if she had been startled, or was experiencing some strong emotion; and she stood with bended head, as if listening.

Nato, entirely forgetful of his performing fellows, was still staring at the girl when she started impetuously, and went hurriedly down the hallway.

Led by curiosity, the boy jumped to his feet, and saw her descend the steps of the back gallery, and go swiftly into the woods, which seemed to swallow up the snowy form and glittering hair — swallow them so suddenly as to leave in the boy's superstitious mind an uncomfortable suggestion that she was not real flesh and blood, but a "sper-rit," or perhaps a second voodoo priestess.

Within the room, near whose open door the girl had stood, Lafitte and De Cazeneuve were having a serious conversation.

The latter was now much older and feebler than the man we met that night at Toulon, awaiting, in the rocky hiding-place of *Le Chien Heureux*, the signal for his departure from France.

Of no more than medium height, he was so bent as to appear even less, and was thin to emaciation. But the lined, wrinkled face was patrician in feature, as were the trembling, withered hands in shape; and from under the heavy white brows a pair of cold blue eyes looked out with the keen avariciousness of a miser.

It was this weakness for gaining and hoarding gold that had led to his consorting with those whom he despised as

social inferiors, and treated at times with scant courtesy. To Lafitte this arrogance was shown less than to any of the others; and of late years he had met the young man as an equal, showing him a consideration which he never had thought of according to Laro.

He was examining some papers when Lafitte entered the room, but he put them aside, and greeted his unexpected visitor with a cordiality which, while by no means effusive, was quite equal to that received by any member of his own household.

Following the custom of the time, he reached out to ring a bell for refreshments, when Lafitte, with an expressive gesture, stayed his hand.

"No, M'sieur le Comte. I can tarry but a very short time — only long enough to impart the very important intelligence I came to bring you."

De Cazeneuve now motioned Lafitte to be seated; and the latter continued, in the same hurried manner, "Before we talk, I have to ask that you read this." And he held out a paper he had drawn from his pocket.

The count, having put on his glasses, took the document; and his wavering hands made the blue paper quiver as if his own startled pulse-beats had stolen into it while he read the contents aloud.

"Whereas the nefarious practice of running in contraband goods, which has hitherto prevailed in different parts of the State, to the great injury of the fair trader, and the diminution of the revenue of the United States, has of late much increased; and whereas the violators of the law, emboldened by the immunity of past trespassers, no longer conceal themselves from the view of the honest part of the community, but, setting the government at defiance, in broad daylight, carry on their infamous traffic; and, whereas it has been officially known to me that, on the 14th of last month, a quantity of smuggled goods, seized by Walter Gilbert, an officer of the revenue of the United States, were forcibly taken from him in open day, at no

great distance from the city of New Orleans, by a party of armed men, under the orders of a certain Jean Lafitte, who fired upon and grievously wounded one of the assistants of the said Walter Gilbert; and, although process has issued for the apprehension of him, the said Jean Lafitte, yet such is the countenance and protection afforded him, or the terror excited by the threats of himself and his associates, that the same remains unexecuted; and whereas the apathy of the good people of the State in checking practices so opposed to morality, and to the laws and interests of the United States, may impair the fair character which Louisiana maintains, and ought to preserve as a member of the American union:

“I have thought proper to issue this, my proclamation, hereby strictly charging and commanding all officers of this State, civil and military, in their respective departments, to be vigilant and active in preventing the violation of the laws in the premises, and in apprehending and securing all parties offending therein; and I do solemnly caution all and singular the citizens of this State against giving any kind of succor, support or countenance to the said Jean Lafitte and associates, but do call upon them to be aiding and abetting in arresting him and said associates, and all others in like manner offending; and I do furthermore, in the name of the State, offer a reward of five hundred dollars, which will be paid out of the treasury to any person delivering the said Jean Lafitte to the sheriff of the parish of Orleans, or to any other sheriff in the State, so that the said Jean Lafitte may be brought to justice.”

The document bore date of March 24th, 1812. It ended in the usual formal fashion, and was signed by Governor Claiborne.

The Island Rose had heard the greater part of it read in her grandfather's voice, low, to be sure, but with a clear enunciation which made each syllable as distinct as though she had been the reader instead of a listener. And when he ended, she heard the voice of him hereto-

fore known to her as "Captain Jean," and its tone was one of banter.

"Well, M'sieur le Count, will you be the one to claim this five hundred dollars, and do your governor and State a brilliant service by delivering to them this body of mine?"

Then came her grandfather's sternly cold reply:

"What have I ever done, Captain Jean Lafitte, that should lead you to suppose I would stoop to traffic in the blood of my associates?"

It was this that made the small hand go fluttering toward the girl's frightened heart. It was the revelation that her "Captain Jean" was none other than Lafitte, the terrible pirate, of whom she had heard such dreadful tales! He was the freebooter, smuggler, and outlaw — the leader of that fearful band of men she had shuddered to hear the slaves mention! And not only was her grandfather cognizant of this, but he was this man's abettor — his associate and friend!

There was now shown to her the meaning of all that she had wondered over in secret — the coming and going of those swarthy, fierce-looking seafarers, whom her grandfather had bade her avoid; the many mysterious meetings of men behind locked doors, at the New Orleans house; her grandfather's sudden trips from home!

Her brain in a whirl, her heart terrified by dread of an undefinable terror, she fled from the house, and into the woods, wandering on, scarcely knowing or caring where, until her steps were arrested by the matted thicket into which she had penetrated with unseeing eyes.

Stopping to disentangle her dress, she looked about with a shudder. She possessed one of those singularly constituted temperaments given to presentiments, more especially where evil was to follow; and for several days a foreboding had been upon her, growing until its dark shadow cast a gloom over her waking hours, at times filling her with positive fear, all the more intense because nameless and unknown.

The veriest trifles would, during the day, make her start, and cause her heart to beat affrightedly; and at night, when she tried to sleep, this strange dread would keep her awake.

But now she thought that all was revealed to her. Her presentiment had become a defined and terrible reality, and it swept away her faith in humanity.

The man whom of all others she trusted in this new, strange, and fettered world into which she had been brought from the peaceful island home, where life had been happy, and free from fear,— he was the notorious Lafitte, the “Pirate of the Gulf,” who scuttled ships, who murdered men and women, and whose hands were red with blood, shed that he might plunder his victims.

CHAPTER THIRTY-ONE

AS she looked about her, in the tangled and shadowy forest, where the night was already coming darkly, a new terror arose within her, and she sought to return by the way she had come, but this was only to find her steps cut off by still denser masses of forest growth. At length, however, pushing her way resolutely through a thicket, she came upon a wide cart track, discernible faintly in the fast fading light.

Knowing that at times her grandfather's slaves cut the wood hereabouts, she set out to follow the track, hoping it would lead to the house.

She hastened along while the gloom steadily increased in the dusky aisles, filled already with shadows from the lofty trees, until presently the wheel-marks ended, while on every side were matted growths that she sought with desperate but unavailing energy to push aside.

At last, pausing in despair, she realized that she must have gone still farther into the forest. But, even as she stood hesitating, there came a faint cry, like that of a child, and a rush of hopefulness thrilled her at the thought of something human being near in the gloom and oppressive stillness.

Turning in the direction from whence the sound came, she called loudly, and went that way, calling again and again. But her own voice answered her in echoes through a stillness that seemed to make the silence more heavy when the sound had died softly away; and again she heard that fretful cry.

Then there fell upon her a freezing terror, as she suddenly recalled the slaves telling recently of a panther's

voice having been heard at night, near the settlement; and she remembered that they had likened it to the crying of a child.

Trembling with fright, she stood, glancing about in terror, wondering which way to turn, when another sound came faintly. It was a sound she had heard before, and one no hearer could ever forget; a short, quick bark, followed by a prolonged howl—the cry of the timber wolf!

Gathering her draperies closely, she sprang forward again, all color gone from the dainty little face, now ashen with fear, against which the bushes and low branches beat unmercifully. On and on she sped, the thickets catching and tearing her thin gown, and scratching cruelly her bare arms and hands. But their paining was unheeded as she fled wildly through the darkening forest, whither, she knew not, but away from the horror behind her.

Again and again the fiendish cry rang out, to be succeeded by another, and then another, as if the first call had summoned a multitude of wolves to the chase. Before many minutes a clearer chorus told her that the pack was drawing near, and her faltering limbs seemed scarcely able to bear her farther. But, for all her dainty femininity, she had a man's heart for courage in the face of danger; and, as she still kept on, with clenched hands and panting breath, a small cabin showed in a clearing before her.

A new strength came to her at sight of this refuge, and she rushed toward it, to find only an untenanted ruin, with its door fallen from the hinges.

But her strained senses heard a pattering that told of the pursuers being close upon her trail; and she darted through the doorway, hoping that a ladder might be found leading to the upper floor.

None was to be seen; only the low, spider-webbed rafters were above her, and through these showed the green twilight of the woods.

But she saw upon the floor a large iron ring, which

indicated the entrance to a cellar; and seizing this, she pulled at it with all her strength.

A small section of the floor lifted, creaking on rusted hinges, and dashing wildly through dust and cobwebs that rose with it, she plunged into the shallow opening, earth-walled and floored, the dust filling her eyes and nostrils, and half-choking her, as she panted sobbingly for breath.

The heart-beats shook her delicate form as she crouched in the stifling blackness; the blood like a torrent rushed and pulsed in her veins, and sparks of light flitted before her dizzy eyes.

But she was safe — for the instant — and too utterly worn out by terror and exhaustion to look beyond the present. Yet, a few moments later, she grew cold with an agony of apprehension, when she heard the noise of her pursuers' feet upon the flooring over her head, and their snuffling at the cracks in the cellar door. She seemed to feel their breath searing her upturned face, and imagined that she could see their gleaming eyes; and, crouching still lower in the shallow hole, she hid her face in her dress, shivering anew at the angry snarls and barks that broke out above her, as if the hungry wolves were enraged at finding themselves baffled.

How long it lasted she scarcely knew, cramped as she was in the darkness, aching, throbbing — half-swooning, with the dreadful creatures howling and snarling above her head; how long it was before the baying of beagles, faint at first, sounded in her ears.

She uncovered her face, and raising her head, listened breathlessly.

Nearer and nearer came the sound, growing strong and clear; and then she heard the shouting of voices.

This brought a new fear, — for might not these come from those fully as much to be feared as were the wolves? The island, as she knew, was several miles long; and she had always known that it held others besides her grandfather's household. But of these others she knew nothing.

What if this deserted cabin were a rendezvous of Lafitte's followers? What if she had but escaped the wolves to find herself snared by these blood-thirsty men?

She listened tremblingly, a new dread encompassing her as the voices of the beagles now broke out close to the cabin. Then there was a rushing sound, followed by an uproar indicating a fierce struggle. The glare of torches came through the chinks of the boards, and the shouting of men, mingling with the growling and yelping of animals, made a distracting tumult over the girl's head.

At length the combat seemed to surge through the cabin door, and a voice which she recognized as that of black Zebo, one of her grandfather's most trusted slaves, shouted, "Dar goes de last debbil, makin' for de woods! Shoot him, boys — shoot eb'ry hide yer can see!"

Roselle called to him, but her voice sounded faint and unnatural to her own ears. Gathering all her strength, she called louder; and this time a hasty step told of her having been heard. Then the door was lifted, and the blinding light of a torch flashed in her face.

"Take me out; take me home!" she cried, raising her arms appealingly, while she sobbed like a terrified child.

A man's voice, one she was too bewildered to recognize, answered her. He laid his torch on the floor, so that it flickered over the edge of the opening, and two strong hands raised her to the floor above, where two shielding arms went around her, holding her closely.

The girl, half-dazed, let herself rest in them unquestioningly, realizing only that she was safe — sheltered and protected.

"Little Rose, — my precious little Island Rose!"

A husky, shaking voice murmured these words against her ear, where she felt the pressure of warm lips.

"Ah, thank God I have thee safe again!"

The touch and words struck sharply through her benumbed senses; and with a cry of affright, she struggled to free herself.

"What is it?" asked Lafitte, now speaking firmly and quickly. "Are you hurt, child — are you injured in any way?"

Picking up his torch, he threw its light upon her shrinking form, and, as she covered her face with her hands, the wounds and dried blood upon them and upon her arms caught his eyes.

"Dear God!" And bending his head, he rained kisses upon the tender, injured flesh.

"Do not — do not!" the girl commanded, now uncovering her face, and looking up at him with an angry light sparkling in her eyes. "How dare you?"

Drawing back a step, Lafitte stared at her in amazement, until suddenly recalling what Nato had told him a short time before, and realizing that what he had then feared was indeed true, he stood before her speechless, a new agony growing in his pale face.

For a moment she met his eyes unflinchingly. Then, dropping her own, turned from him with a shudder, as she said coldly, "I wish to be taken to the house, Captain —"

She stopped as if checked at the thought of uttering his name.

"In a moment, mademoiselle," he answered with the cool courtesy he would have shown a stranger. "The men and dogs are still chasing the wolves; and it will be well, before we leave here, to make sure that all the animals are killed, or frightened away."

He walked to the doorway, and looked out into the darkness, from which still came yells and cries, with the occasional sound of fire-arms.

The stars were paling, and dawn was near; but the trees interlaced too thickly for this to be observed.

Still standing in the doorway, with his back to her, he continued, "Your grandpère has been alarmed, mademoiselle, on your account. He had sent for you to come and bid me adieu; and then, when your absence was discovered, it was quite late. He was distracted, was Mon-

sieur le Comte, as was Barbê, and Zeney — all of us. But I found some one who could tell of having seen you enter the forest; and, by help of the hounds, we found and followed your trail.”

He now turned to her; and seeing that she had sunk to the floor, as if from weariness, his face softened. But, as he started toward her, she raised her eyes, and he saw a shudder go through her slender form. She looked up at him as if fearful of his nearness.

The flare of his torch, which he had fastened in a crevice immediately above her head, threw a flickering light over her glittering, disordered hair, and, tired, worn as she was, she was inexpressibly sweet to look upon.

“Are you cold?” he asked gently, and came no nearer to her.

“No,” was her mechanically spoken reply; and seeing how she appeared to shrink from him, Lafitte turned away, a bitter smile hardening his face as he resumed his post in the doorway.

Presently, and without changing his position, he said, “There can be no telling, little Rose, when you will see me after this night, if indeed ever again. You have heard something which has made you regard me as a stranger. Be it so. But I must nevertheless venture to impress upon you the fact that one word lisped of what you overheard will surely imperil your grandpère’s fortune and liberty — perhaps his life.”

She said nothing, nor did he, for the space of a full minute. Then, with his face still turned to the darkness outside he resumed:

“If the day may ever come when you can think of me with less condemnation, remember always what I tell you now. I do not, nor can I ever, blame you. And, if I can ever serve you, you have but to command me, always and forever.”

He ended softly, lingering over the closing words, and turned to her with a mute entreaty struggling through

the anguish showing in his face. But Roselle sat silent, with clasped hands and averted eyes.

Some of the slaves, who had returned from the hunt, now sent up a joyous shout at sight of their "lil' Ma'm'-selle" unhurt; and rising, she smiled upon them as they gathered around her.

Two of them, under Lafitte's direction, made a seat of their interlocked hands, and bearing her between them, set out for the house, with flaring torches lighting the way. Lafitte walked close behind the carriers and their precious burden, to whom he felt that he had become but a little less terrible than the wolves from whom she had escaped.

CHAPTER THIRTY-TWO

THE proclamation of Governor Claiborne had but little immediate effect upon the affairs of Barataria and its free-acting denizens.

It resulted, however, in inducing Count de Cazeneuve to return to his New Orleans home earlier than usual; and Lafitte's house in the city was closed, while a trusted negro overseer was left in charge of the blacksmith shop, with orders to say that his master had gone away upon matters of business.

It was to Grande Terre that Pierre had gone, feeling that a time was near at hand for the joining of issues between his *confrères* and the government, and wishing, as always, to share the fortunes of his foster-brother.

On the western shore of Grande Terre, with several miles of forest lying between it and De Cazeneuve's house, was the so-called "fort" of the Baratarians, standing upon a grassy eminence dotted with magnificent live oaks, and terminating at a bluff not many feet above the sea.

It consisted of a fair-sized building and several smaller ones, all of wood, enclosed within a stockade; and a few cannon protected the fleet — now consisting of two brigantines, some small schooners, and sloops, and a large number of smaller craft — anchored in the harbor at the rear of the island.

Outside the stockade were many huts, constructed of logs, and with thatched roofs, where were always domiciled a small army of Lafitte's retainers, while he — when at Grande Terre — and a few of his sub-leaders had their quarters inside.

Shell Island, already mentioned, up one of the almost inaccessible bayous, was his most frequent abode, where he kept about him only a few devoted followers; and here, amid impenetrable forests, was conducted the building of vessels.

Pierre Lafitte had, after leaving New Orleans, taken up his abode within the Barataria fort, while Jean, as was his custom, came and went, as accorded with his various duties. Matters there were now more active than usual, as an attack by the State authorities had been anticipated after the issue of the governor's proclamation, and a strong force had been assembled to meet it. But, following closely upon this, had come other stirring events, which, being of a less local nature, distracted attention from Barataria.

War between the United States and Great Britain had been waging for a year or more; but it had not yet threatened Louisiana, nor had any preparations been made at New Orleans to resist an attack from the enemy.

But, in the summer of 1813, occurred the horrible massacre at Fort Mims, in the Mississippi valley, occupied by some two hundred and seventy persons, many of them women and children, of whom all but seventeen were put to death by the Creeks, one of the tribes which the English had won over for allies.

Governor Claiborne had foreseen this threatened peril, but was powerless to avert it, for his forces were few and scattered, while the Indians seemed innumerable, and moved with wonderful activity. It appeared as if nothing could prevent their progress southward, and consternation reigned throughout the State. But the governor did all in his power to restore confidence; and not long afterwards General Jackson utterly destroyed the Creeks at Talladega.

All this — as has been stated — served, during the closing months of 1813, to distract the attention of the authorities from their meditated vengeance upon the Baratarians, and the latter — at least such of them as were sojourning

at their island strongholds—were, for the time being, peaceful, law-abiding citizens.

Early in May, 1814, Jean Lafitte disappeared from the view of his associates and followers, gone, only a trusted few knew where; and Pierre, who was now living at the fort on Grande Terre, became nominal leader.

To the latter Jean's departure was an unspeakable relief; for, since his coming to Grande Terre—which had been almost simultaneous with the return of the De Cazeneuve household to New Orleans—Pierre had been at an utter loss to account for the—in his view—wilful madness with which Jean appeared to be possessed.

The latter had, with the governor's proclamation hanging over his head, persisted in going again and again to New Orleans, where he walked the streets in open daylight, and met his clients unreservedly, thereby showing a lack of prudence which was but little less than insanity, as Pierre sought to make his foster-brother realize, only to have his protests received with a bitter smile, or perhaps with a show of irritation.

It was after one of these trips, in the early part of 1814, that, upon returning to Grande Terre, he told Pierre of having recently met Greloire, who had been for some time in New Orleans upon a private matter of his own, but had now gone back to France.

"My heart may be telling me wrongfully, Pierre," Jean had said, as the two sat talking in their abode at Grande Terre—a cabin outside, but luxurious within, "but I have a feeling that if I now go to the emperor, I may find the opportunity for serving him; and that this may prove to him the love that has never died."

Pierre had been looking with troubled eyes at the worn, tired face opposite, and a sudden contraction in his throat made his voice husky when he replied, "Aye, go and throw away your life, by serving him! They say he cares only for such as he can use."

Jean glanced at him angrily.

"Nay, be not vexed with me," said Pierre gravely; "for I but repeat what I have so often heard; and the thought of your going away now, and on what may be a fool's errand, makes my heart heavy with a weight caused by my love for thee. Napoleon has thousands to serve him and love him; but I — what have I in the world, save thee? And what thou art to me, I think these many years have proved."

The anger died out of Jean's face, and his look changed to one of affection; but he answered with his accustomed calmness.

"Why do you say 'now'? When has a better time offered? We can do but little business with matters as they are at present; and you can attend to everything, the same as would I."

"Perhaps," said Pierre, hesitatingly. "But what is it that makes you think you may be of service to the emperor and France?"

"To say truth, I have no idea that is definite; but I feel an irresistible inclination to go, and see if the opportunity offers. Then I have a longing to see France again. I would like to assure myself as to the chance of serving him; and, if this is not to be, I will return, and be here by summer or fall, at the latest."

"And then?" inquired Pierre, a wistful look showing in his stolid face.

"Eh?" said Jean sharply, as if not comprehending the other's exact meaning.

"If you should find service over there, — then what?"

Pierre's tone was composed; but his restless feet disturbed the hound sleeping in front of his chair, causing the dog to change his location to one nearer the fire.

"Why," replied Jean, "then you can wind up our matters here, and come over to join me. Why not?"

"Why not, indeed? That is assuredly what I would do, if" — and Pierre hesitated for an instant — "I could."

"And what can prevent?"

Pierre stroked his heavy chin and puffed slowly at his cigar.

"What is to prevent, I say?" repeated Jean, now speaking somewhat impatiently.

"In such a case," Pierre replied deliberately, "there would be a valuable cargo to come with me, and watchful enemies here to blind. Then possibly, or most probably, by summer or fall, with the English vessels patrolling the waters around us, the safe getting away might not be so easy a matter."

"Summer and fall are not now," was the oracular declaration; "and by the time they come, it may be that the English will have been made to slink home again, as once before. I predict that such will be the case, perhaps before they reach as far down the coast as this."

"I don't feel at all sure as to that," Pierre commented, as he rose to cover the embers upon the hearth, doing it with the same leisurely care that marked all his movements and operations. Then, turning to Jean, he continued, as though there had been no interruption, "I tell thee, lad, that Louisiana has always possessed a great attraction for Great Britain."

"Grant it," said Jean, rising and stretching himself. "Then all the more reason why, in case they succeed in obtaining it, that we should wish to live somewhere else."

"Ah, but I am not saying that they will rule here!" exclaimed Pierre, with a showing of anger at thought of the possibility suggested by Jean's words. "God forbid!"

"Amen to that," said Jean, laughing at the quick change in his foster-brother's manner and look; and they soon parted for the night.

It was a bright morning in May that the "Black Petrel," with Jean Lafitte and a picked crew, and bearing a cargo of rich merchandise (the larger portion of whose proceeds he had promised to his men, in order to assure their proper behavior), sailed from Barataria; and Pierre, his

heart filled with loneliness and misgivings, sat on the bluff, watching her sails until they melted away on the horizon. Yet, despite all this, it was an actual relief for him to know that Jean, with his present reckless disregard for threatening danger, was to be absent for a time from Louisiana.

CHAPTER THIRTY-THREE

THE winds proving unfavorable, it was not until an evening in early July that the "Black Petrel" anchored in the harbor of Bordeaux.

Lafitte slept aboard that night, and went ashore the next morning, leaving the brigantine in charge of Lopez, whom he had made first mate, and to whom he now gave instructions as to the disposition of the cargo, coupled with the information that he himself might be absent for several days.

The morning sun was gilding the harbor and town, while clustering roofs and spires seemed to invite Lafitte to a peaceful rest; and a strange thrill ran through him as he set foot on shore, and realized that it was the soil of France.

Knowing the location of Greloire's house, he lost no time in reaching it, and was admitted by a sleepy-eyed servant, who looked somewhat suspiciously at this handsome, foreign-clad stranger, demanding, rather than requesting, to see his master.

"M'sieur is breakfasting," he explained grumblingly, while he refastened the outer door.

But his surly manner changed promptly when the visitor, after slipping a piece of gold into his hand, said, "Your master has been expecting me, and will not object to receiving me, even at this early hour. Take me to him at once."

"Yes, m'sieur; follow me, if you please."

He led the way through a spacious hall to a closed door at the farther end; this he opened noiselessly, and announced, "A gentleman whom m'sieur is expecting."

Greloire was sitting with his back to the door, and had not time to turn around before Lafitte's quick perception noted that something was seriously amiss. The breakfast was untouched, and Greloire, with both elbows on the chair arms, sat motionless, his face sunk in his hands.

At the sound of the servant's voice he started hastily; and the frown upon his usually insouciant face made it look most unfamiliar as he glanced over his shoulder, to see Lafitte's dark eyes bent upon him.

But, with a joyful exclamation, while a rush of pleasurable light changed his expression, he jumped to his feet and turned around, with outstretched hands.

"Jean, Jean, lad! It is truly thy very self! And thou hast at last broken away, and come back to the old fold!"

Lafitte grasped the welcoming hands and shook them cordially. But his eyes, still searching Greloire's face, saw, beneath its look of momentary gladness, one of keen anguish; and the younger man wondered what trouble had come to his friend.

"I cannot say as to that, old comrade," was his guarded reply. "I have certainly broken away, for a time, at least; but for how long, and to what purpose, the near future must decide — not I."

Greloire's face clouded again, but only for an instant; and, placing a chair for his guest, he pressed him to take breakfast.

This, however, Lafitte declined, explaining that he had already partaken of the meal aboard ship.

"You sailors are surely early birds," said Greloire, who had resumed his chair.

He spoke laughingly, and raised his cup to his mouth, only to set it down again.

"*Peste!*" he exclaimed, ringing the bell. "It is cold as English blood."

"Bring fresh coffee," he added, speaking to the servant who answered the summons; and Lafitte, happening to

turn his head, saw the glittering black eyes of an Indian fixed upon him.

But they dropped, as the slender, copper-colored hands took the coffee-pot; and the lithe, curiously clad form vanished noiselessly from the room.

"You are probably surprised," said Greloire, with a smile, "to see a south sea Indian as a servant in my house. The fellow has been with me these two years or more, and I have found him quite useful."

"What is his name?" inquired Lafitte, with assumed carelessness.

"Ehewah," replied Greloire, as he lifted the cover of a dish containing creamed toast, still warm enough to send up a faint vapor. "He was, strange to tell, aboard an English man-of-war; and I happened to save his life during a *mêlée* his hot temper invited one night down among the London docks. He appeared to be very grateful for this, and begged to serve me, which I let him do in the way I have said."

The door now opened again, and Ehewah entered with the coffee, which he placed upon the table, and was about leaving the room, when he paused at the door, behind his master's back, and gave Lafitte a keen glance, at the same time laying a finger against his thin lips.

"I feel greatly flattered, Jean, that you should be in such haste to see me," said Greloire, as he began to eat — doing it in a perfunctory fashion that indicated the performance of a duty.

To Lafitte, Greloire's smiles appeared forced, and his manner altogether unnatural; but the former gave no show to his thoughts as he replied, "That is the one thing I have been trying to do this many a day, my old friend. I have, since our meeting at Martinique, been longing to see a clear way out of the position and environments I have made for myself. This, until of late, has not been quite possible; but now I have come to you."

"And you are very welcome. But" — with a keen glance — "why have you come?"

"To ask you to take me to the emperor, and, if it may be, help me to find some way of serving him."

Greloire's fork fell upon his plate.

"The emperor!" he repeated, a cloud of anguish sweeping all the brightness from his face. "Know you not what has happened — that he is no longer emperor of France?"

"What!" cried Lafitte, starting from his chair. Then he added lightly, "You are jesting, or trying to surprise me. Perhaps you will tell me that he is now ruler of all Europe."

"Not I. *Mon Dieu* — when I think of it, I feel that never can I jest again! But I am forgetting that you are a sea rover, and not likely to hear land news quickly. I am forgetting, too, that this is France, and not Louisiana; although I wonder you did not notice the flag upon the Hôtel de Ville. But the disastrous intelligence must now have reached America; and it will, perhaps, better nerve the English arm for striking at your adopted countrymen."

"But what mean you by all this?" demanded Lafitte, rising to his feet. "What has happened — of what are you talking?"

"I can explain everything in a few words," replied Greloire, evidently trying to repress his feelings, and assume a calmness of manner. "The Russian campaign was most disastrous, and the emperor returned, beaten. The allies followed him to Paris, where he defeated their three armies, one after the other, although he was outnumbered five to one. But he lost many men, some of his most trusted marshals turned traitors, and he was forced finally to abdicate. Then the allies — those who had been proud of his friendship, and sought his aid in former years — sent him to Elba, as its ruler. Yes, *mon ami*, he who was emperor of France, a man who has made England and all Europe tremble, is now ruler of a paltry island not

much larger than this table; and France is once more under the rule of the Bourbons!"

He spoke with fast increasing anger, and ended by springing from his chair and beginning to stride up and down the room.

Lafitte, who had listened with wide-open eyes, seemed scarcely able to comprehend all that he had heard.

"What is this you tell me?" he muttered slowly, amazement and rage giving a new look to his face. "Do you say that the emperor is on Elba?"

"He is, and exiled there. I am telling you what all Europe has known for weeks!" cried Greloire passionately, the tears streaming from his eyes. "I am telling you what history must brand as the basest treatment ever accorded a monarch."

"And I came, hoping that he could find use for my services here in France."

Lafitte spoke despairingly; for again, as three years before, had Greloire uttered words to stir the uttermost depths of his nature.

"France holds many a heart with such a hope," declared the ex-soldier bitterly. "But of what avail is it now?"

"Much, perhaps, if taken aright, and utilized properly," quickly answered Lafitte, who seemed to have recovered something of his accustomed courage. "I have ships, and can promise even more than I now own. I have gold; and all I have (which I assure you is not a little) would be at his command."

Greloire made no reply, but threw himself into his chair, and covered his face.

"I have much to offer him," continued Lafitte persistently; "and all I have, even to my life, is his, if he will use it."

But Greloire shook his head gloomily as he took his hands from before his face.

"I fear it is all of no avail; for they say that he is now strangely indifferent to everything."

It was some little time before Greloire was able to assume any great amount of his usual composure; and then, complying with Lafitte's request, he gave the latter an outline of the causes which had led to Napoleon's overthrow.

The younger man listened attentively, asking questions now and then, to make the statement clearer to him.

"I understand," he said decisively, when the story was finished. "It was the combination of all Europe, at the instigation of England, to crush one man, and with him, the people of France."

"Precisely," was Greloire's equally decisive assent. "All his former allies were massed against him; but he kept them at bay until he was betrayed, and left with but a remnant of his army. He never fought more brilliantly, nor with better judgment; and he was crushed by the mere force of numbers. It was then that he abdicated; and, as he said, for the welfare of France."

Lafitte rose and went to an open window, through which he looked out upon a small garden, embellished with a variety of plants and shrubs.

Here he stood in silence, until Greloire, his mind cleared—for the time—of emotion by his recent recital, lit a cigar as he said, "In the face of such odds, and betrayed by his generals, what could the emperor do?"

Lafitte did not appear to have heard the question, for, turning suddenly, he asked, "Tell me, old friend—do you think it would be possible for me to see him?"

The eagerness of the inquiry caused Greloire to look up in surprise, as if wondering what new idea might be taking form in the younger man's brain. Then, settling himself in his chair, and resting an elbow on the table, he asked, as if expecting to discuss the matter, "Why should you wish to see him?"

But there was little of argument; for Lafitte, with two long strides, was at the opposite side of the table, upon whose top he brought down his clenched fist with a force that imperilled the china and glassware.

"For the best of reasons — because I love him. Do you understand?"

"Yes, my impetuous young friend," was the reply, accompanied by a smile that lightened the speaker's face with its old-time expression.

"*Bien*. Then answer my question, Greloire, and tell me if you think it possible that I can see him?"

"Why not? He is, to be sure, under a certain sort of surveillance; for there is an English commissioner stationed upon the island, who is supposed to report the emperor's doings. But Napoleon's ordinary movements are quite under his own control, I should say, judging from the little I know. He receives many people who visit Elba in order to pay him homage."

"Then surely I should be able to see him. But how can it be arranged? Cannot you think of some plan?" demanded Lafitte, a mingling of pleasure and impatience showing in his face as he again seated himself. "And remember that you are to accompany me. You can, I hope; and you will?"

It was now Greloire's face that showed gratification; and there was no lack of it in his voice.

"That I can, and will, *mon ami*, and with delight; for I scarcely need tell you how I long to see the emperor. How soon do you wish to start?"

"At once, for I can afford to lose no time. It must be now," was the impatient reply. "But can you be at all sure that he will receive us?"

"Nothing is sure, save that which is past," declared Greloire, impressively, adding, after a moment's pause, "but I wish you did not feel obliged to make such haste."

"I am forced to do it, and all the more because the result seems uncertain. If I can serve him, I may not return to Louisiana, but, if I am to return, I must do so speedily, owing to matters there."

There was a short silence, after which Greloire, who appeared to have been turning something in his mind,

exclaimed, "*Bien!* I believe I can see a very clear way for ourselves."

"Yes, — what is it?"

"Do you remember Murier?"

"Murier — Murier," Lafitte repeated thoughtfully. "The name sounds like one I should remember, although I cannot say why."

"Murier was with us at Languedoc, in the days of the 'bonnet-rouge,' and was wounded at the château. It was he who brought you to Bonaparte, that morning after the storming of Toulon. Do you not remember?"

A grave look had been deepening in Lafitte's face, and his voice had a softer tone as he answered, "Yes, yes, old friend, I remember Murier. But what can he possibly have to do with our project?"

"Much, as you will see when I explain. Murier and I were much together, and much to one another — close comrades. He lost an arm at Wagram, was decorated, and pensioned, and then went to Elba, where he has since lived with his married sister, Madame Teche, whose husband is a farmer. We will go first to Murier; he is close to the emperor — perhaps in his service, and I doubt not that he will be able to arrange for an interview. But of this I am certain — that he will welcome us, and do all in his power to serve us."

"Good!" exclaimed Lafitte, from whose face the reminiscent look had vanished. "And now, Greloire, let us consult as to the details. How soon can we depart?"

Then, while the day grew, the two perfected their plans.

CHAPTER THIRTY-FOUR

LAFITTE deemed it advisable to inform Lopez of the fact that Ehewah was in Bordeaux, and an inmate of Greloire's house, as by so doing, probable trouble might be prevented should the gunner and Indian chance to meet.

It was late in the afternoon when he took his way toward the wharves, from which a boat would take him out to the "Black Petrel;" and he had gone but a short distance from Greloire's dwelling when a shrill whistle came to his ears.

A moment later he heard it again, and glancing over his shoulder, saw Ehewah hastening to overtake him.

He now walked more slowly, until the Indian came up; and, while vouchsafing the latter no notice, he was nevertheless aware of the anxious look showing in the latter's face.

Presently the Indian spoke.

"Captain Jean, is it good or ill between us?"

"That remains to be seen," was the carelessly uttered answer.

The Indian appeared somewhat disconcerted at Lafitte's indifferent manner, and continued sullenly, "What Ehewah did, was what he was driven to do. His wrongs called for vengeance."

"I never did you wrong," said Lafitte coldly.

"No, no — never, Captain Jean."

"Yet you tried to sell me to my worst enemy."

"Rage blinds the eye," was the dogged reply.

"Aye, so it does. And that is why rage is a luxury that often demands a high price, as you may discover some day."

The Indian, as if tired of generalities, especially in a discussion wherein he was becoming worsted, returned to personal matters.

"Ehewah is sick of the white man's home, and of life in this land; he longs for his own island and people. Let me go with you, Captain Jean. I will promise you my life, if but you will take me back where I may get to my own people once more."

The homesick longing that sounded in the words brought a momentary softening to Lafitte's face, as he turned, for the first time, and faced the Indian.

"I may not go over seas for some time to come, Ehewah; and, even if I could take you, it would not be safe for you to go with me. Lopez, and other men who have not forgotten the fight off the Devil's Key, and the part you played in it, are aboard my vessel."

The Indian was silent, and a look of dejection came to his face.

"Take my advice and remain where you are," continued Lafitte. "And if you desire to see your people again, remember what I tell you now—for the next two weeks have a care how you roam about the city, or go near the wharves. Monsieur Greloire tells me that you have served him faithfully, and that he cares for you. This being so, I promise you protection for the future, so far as lies within my power. But you who know so well our ways and code, know how little my protection would avail, should you fall into the power of my men; so I bid you beware of them. That is all," he added, with a gesture of dismissal.

Ehewah, without a word, glided away, and Lafitte went to the wharves, where he found a boatman to row him out to the brigantine.

Wild was Lopez' burst of rage over what was told him; but by force of persuasion, not unaccompanied by threats, Lafitte succeeded in wringing a promise from the old gunner that he would do the Indian no bodily harm, should chance bring them together.

"Remember, Lopez," said Lafitte, after the promise had been given, "that this is not the Barra de Hierro, nor our

harbor at Barataria; neither is it New Orleans. You must do nothing to jeopardize our safety, nor that of the 'Black Petrel,' of which I am leaving you in charge until my return."

"But, ah, sir," the old gunner replied wistfully, although the words came through his set teeth, "if but the good saints would set me face to face with the Indian on Grande Terre!"

Lafitte smiled satirically.

"The good saints should scarcely be credited with bringing about such meetings."

"Perhaps not," muttered Lopez. "Then let the devil do it, for surely he is the controller of Ehewah's ways."

"No more of this, Lopez," said Lafitte, now resuming his air of authority, "for the matter is settled. You have my commands and I have your promise. I have ever known you to be a man of your word; and so I leave you, believing that the Indian is safe from harm at your hands and those of the crew — at least so far as you can control the men. I am going ashore at once; so come with me to my cabin, as I have some instructions to give you in regard to the vessel and cargo."

Lafitte and Greloire set out on horseback that same evening, making no prolonged stop until Toulon was reached. They arrived there early one afternoon, and rested until the following morning; and the two — Lafitte more especially — felt like ghosts returned to former scenes as they rambled about the slightly changed streets.

They visited the localities associated with their previous sojourn in the city, — the site of Margot's cottage, and her grave; the convent, and the fortifications. Thiel was long since dead, and Le Chien-Heureux was now a much-patched, disreputable caravansary, the resort of watermen and common sailors.

They left their horses at Toulon, and pushed on by hired conveyance to Cannes. Then, in order to avoid suspicion, they crossed over to Leghorn, and chartering a

large fishing smack, sailed for Porto Ferrajo, the principal port of Elba, where the emperor resided.

The island had then some thirteen thousand inhabitants, and contained within its small area salt-marshes, mountains, and forests. Its harbors and salient points were fortified, and vineyards, mines, salt-works, and fisheries gave its people abundant employment.

This was the little realm to which Napoleon had been banished, and where he was expected to idle away the remaining years of his life, — he who had controlled the fate of Europe, and lifted France to shine with such resplendent glory before the world !

So mused Lafitte, as he looked about him, after landing, while Greloire went up to a group of lounging fishermen who were staring with stupid curiosity at the two strangers, and asked the direction of the Teche farm.

It was about a mile inland; and one of the younger men offering his services as guide, he led the way from the beach, across a grassy field, until, having passed through a piece of woods, they came out upon an eminence overlooking a fertile valley, planted with vines, as were also the opposite hillsides.

Below lay a spacious wooden dwelling, and near it a man, coatless, and with one shirt-sleeve swinging empty of the arm that should have filled it, was walking slowly about, a large dog following at his heels.

“Murier himself, by all that is fortunate !” muttered Greloire, raising a hand to better shade his eyes from the glare of sunshine.

“That is M’sieur Murier, the brother of Madame Teche,” said the guide, pointing down at the figure.

“Aye, my man; but, thanking you all the same, I have not soldiered with him for twenty years to need an introduction now,” Greloire replied, with a jovial laugh that took away any hint of brusqueness from his words; and, after putting a piece of silver in the fisherman’s brown hand, he dismissed him.

As the two took their way down the hillside, toward Murier, who had not as yet perceived them, and stood with his head turned, as if watching something in the distance, Greloire, with a curious look upon his face, said, in a tone that made Lafitte glance at him in surprise, "It is a strange chance — most strange! Do you recall, Jean, when last you saw Murier?"

"Yes. But what of that?"

"This — that now, after all these many years, you see Murier again for the first time since that morning; and that now, as then, he will conduct you to the same man. To me this is most strange."

"But it is not the same as then," said Lafitte, with marked bitterness of tone. "Then he wished to see me — sent for me. To-day it is I who seek; and I may be refused."

"Talk not so, *mon ami*; but wait and see," answered Greloire cheerily, after which he took a deep breath, and sent his voice ahead in a vigorous and prolonged shout.

They were close enough to see Murier's perplexed face as he turned quickly and looked toward them. But the perplexity was lost in a glow of glad eagerness, as he came forward and grasped Greloire by the arm, while the latter's hands caught the coatless shoulders and shook them playfully.

"Aha, old comrade," Greloire cried laughingly, "I rejoice to see that the Elba sun has made those cheeks of thine less white than when I last saw them, in the hospital. Thou art well?" And he looked keenly into the face before him.

"Quite well, my dear Félix, I assure you," was the more quiet reply, although the speaker's dark face shone with pleasure. "But what happy fortune has brought thee to this part of the world, to gladden my eyes?"

While speaking, he glanced at Greloire's companion, who had removed his hat, and was running his fingers restlessly through the heavy locks of dark hair lying upon his moist forehead.

"You shall know all about it later," said Greloire. "But let me present you, Murier, to Captain Lafitte, of Louisiana — in the United States, you will understand. He is my friend; and I beg on his behalf your hospitality for a short time, and the same for myself."

Murier extended his hand to Lafitte, who, with a few courteous words, clasped it warmly.

"You see," Greloire added, "that I have no need to tell him about you; for he knows already what close comrades you and I have been."

Murier smiled at this as he said, "Captain Lafitte, I am happy to meet you. My brother-in-law is absent from home; but such poor hospitality as is his and mine will be honored by your acceptance."

Murier's English was more halting than even that of Greloire, and a smile of gratification lighted his face when Lafitte replied in French, "I thank you, m'sieur, for your kind greeting to a stranger whom you have no need to address in the detestable English tongue."

A still more expressive gleam showed in Murier's eyes as he heard the final words; and Greloire laughed.

It had been agreed that Lafitte should be known to Murier as Captain Lafitte, from America, who desired to do himself the honor of paying his respects to the exiled emperor. But as the three, at Murier's suggestion, now went toward the house, Lafitte found himself possessed by a strong inclination to make himself known to this man, whose name and existence he had so long forgotten, but whose face and form recalled vividly the past, and that sorrowful morning of Margot's death, when he, a soldier of the Republic, had led the half-crazed lad along the horror-filled streets, and sought with such hearty sympathy to turn his senses and thoughts from the scenes about them.

Spare of figure, and much more sinewy than Greloire, with his dark locks still plentiful, and showing scarcely any white hairs, Murier was less changed by the passing years than was his old-time comrade.

His face was marked by an infinite sadness, tempered but slightly by his smile; and there was about him a hushed, softened air, which told of mental, as well as physical, suffering. This gave to his presence and manner a pathetic dignity that was refining, more especially as one listened to his low voice and careful speech, and noted the empty sleeve swaying limply from his shoulder.

His emperor's misfortunes, no less than his own, had changed the active bearing of the soldier to the dreamy manner of the scholar.

"He will never be the same man again, m'sieur — never," sighed Madame Teche, a plump little dame, with a marked resemblance in features to Murier. She was sitting with Lafitte upon the veranda of her house, while her brother and Greloire had gone inside to converse.

Lafitte had been drawing her out to talk of Murier, whose personality appealed to him strongly; and she, nothing loath, had been pouring into the ears of this charming American gentleman, whom she found so sympathetic, the story of her love and anxiety for her only brother.

Yet, when trying to repeat their conversation to her husband, upon his return, she could recall scarcely a word this "so charming American" had said. But she remembered distinctly that "he spoke French so perfectly, like one of ourselves: and he was so grand-looking — such a very distinguished gentleman. His rich voice and beautiful eyes were so sympathetic when I talked to him of our poor brother and his broken heart."

Lafitte found her very entertaining, and was greatly amused when she ventured to question him about America, inquiring, with a delicate hesitancy, if he had scalped many enemies, and if he could give her an imitation of the war-whoop!

He was trying to explain that these accomplishments pertained exclusively to the Indians, and that being an American did not necessarily imply the possession of

a red skin, or living in a wigwam, when her brother and Greloire came out and joined them; and the kindly little woman bustled indoors to supervise the preparation of a suitable dinner to be set before her guests.

The emperor's abode was a short way over the hills from the Teche farm, in an opposite direction from the beach; and Greloire was not long in realizing that he had done well in seeking Murier, for the latter was — although not constantly — in attendance upon Napoleon, who showed especial favor to one associated with him in happier times.

He had, upon this particular day, gone driving, toward the interior of the island, but would return early in the afternoon, when Murier was expected to report to him for duty.

The emperor had, with his accustomed energy, already made many improvements, in the way of constructing dykes, bettering roads, and strengthening fortifications; and as in France, so here, he was winning the hearts of all those about him.

The only person now exercising surveillance upon Elba was the English commissioner, who happened to be absent for a day from Porto Ferrajo. This was a fortunate circumstance for Lafitte and Greloire, as the commissioner was supposed to keep a watchful eye upon the emperor, and report his observations to the English cabinet.

Still — as Greloire had said — it was no uncommon thing for travellers to visit Elba with the object of paying their respects to Napoleon; and Murier, after laying Greloire's request before him, was to ascertain if he would consent to receive his former soldier and the American captain that same evening.

Thus had it been settled when Murier and Greloire came out of the house and joined the two who were chatting on the shaded veranda.

When their hostess took her departure, Lafitte turned to Murier and asked abruptly, "How does your em-

peror bear his exile? Seems he happy at all, or even content?"

Murier, who was about to light one of the choice cigars proffered by Lafitte from his goodly store of them, let fall the burning tinder and put his foot upon it. Then, after skilfully lighting another piece, he gave the questioner a surprised look, but was silent.

"I beg you to tell me," urged Lafitte, "for the question is prompted neither by curiosity nor unfriendly feeling. The name of Napoleon is a most illustrious one in Louisiana. You must also bear in mind that we are now at war with England on our own account, and that we are no friends of his enemies."

A look of pleasure came to Murier's face, only to fade away as he replied cautiously, "I must beg you, M'sieur le Capitaine, to have a care how you speak such words here. All appears to be safe; but one can never be sure what the very walls may hear and repeat."

"Pardon me," said Lafitte, lowering his voice. "But I pray you to tell me what I have asked."

"Have you ever seen him? You speak as one who admires — yes, loves him." Murier spoke rapidly, and his searching eyes showed a certain surprise at the eagerness manifested in the younger man's face.

"I surely admire and love him," was the answer, hearty, and yet evasive of Murier's question. "Cannot one do this without having seen him?"

"Indeed yes, m'sieur," replied Murier, in a tone of strong emotion. "Are there many hearts in America, may I ask, who hold him thus?"

Lafitte hesitated a moment before answering with an emphasis that left nothing for Murier to desire, "If they knew him as do I, every heart would feel as does mine. As it is, nowhere in France is his name held more sacred than in Louisiana. Now, M'sieur Murier, will you not answer my question?"

The truth and sincerity sounding in the words, together

with the speaker's earnest manner and magnetic smile, were not to be resisted.

"Certainly, M'sieur le Capitaine; I will answer you frankly. Whenever I have seen the emperor, which of late has been frequently, it has been to see him tranquil, almost to indifference."

Here Greloire, who had been listening with growing indignation, broke into the conversation.

"And think you, Murier, that such a state of affairs is to continue? Can you believe that his wonderful powers are crushed — lost in this indifference of which you speak? No! I believe that, sooner or later, he will rise, and —"

"Sh-h!" warned Murier, with a quick, imperative gesture. "This is a time and place, old comrade, when it is wise to do no believing aloud. Let us talk no more of such matters, but learn from M'sieur le Capitaine something of that wonderful country of his — Louisiana."

Greloire, still scowling, flicked the ashes from his cigar, and Murier, addressing Lafitte, said smilingly, "It must be a rich land, m'sieur, if this delicious cigar be a fair sample of its products." And with the air of an appreciative connoisseur, he exhaled a cloud of fragrant smoke.

The conversation now — and to Murier's apparent relief — turned to Louisiana and its prospects, and the probable outcome of the war between the United States and England.

Of the latter, however, little could be said; for, in those days of infrequent and slow communication, there was small chance of Lafitte knowing, until his return to Barataria, more of matters pertaining to America than he knew when leaving Grande Terre.

The talk was interrupted by the reappearance of Madame Teche, who summoned them to dinner; and Greloire and Lafitte, — the former more especially, — who had found little enjoyment in the cuisine of the fishing smack, were not slow in accepting the invitation.

By the time full justice had been done to the generous meal, the hour had come for Murier to report for duty;

and, promising to return with all possible speed, he left the guests to be entertained by his sister.

The twilight was near, with the glow of sunset paled in the valley, and the shadows climbing the hills outlined sharply against the liquid glory of the cloudless sky, when he returned with the information that the emperor would, at eight o'clock, receive Greloire and his friend, the American gentleman; and shortly afterwards they, guided by Murier, took their way across the darkening valley, and entered a grassy road that wound through a gateway of the hills.

Save an occasional interchange of words between the two old soldiers, nothing was said, while, thrilled by a turmoil of thoughts and emotions, Lafitte, the cool, self-contained leader of lawless men, now felt his heart fluttering with the nervous anticipation of a woman about to meet the man loved by her above all else.

CHAPTER THIRTY-FIVE

WHEN Lafitte and Greloire were ushered into Napoleon's cabinet, and the former's eyes fell upon him he had for so many years longed to see, his first sensation was that of pain.

Love alone had limned the picture the man's heart retained of his boyhood's idol; neither time nor care had aged or marred the lines, nor dimmed with shadows its glowing colors. But the present's reality banished all this, and awoke the realization that the sacredly cherished picture was but a memory.

The slender form was gone, — lost in the personality of the stout, middle-aged man, who, lounging in a velvet-cushioned chair, looked at Lafitte carelessly — coldly, as at an entire stranger.

The eyes held the same mystic look in their gray depths, and the face was still pale and classical; but its lines were hardened, and heavier than of old. The hair, worn much shorter, was thinner; yet it retained its brown hue, with no sign of time's whitening touch.

The hands, once the sinewy ones of a young soldier, were now as delicate as those of a woman.

The cream-white of his breeches, reaching to the knee, and of the coat, with gold-embroidered cuffs and collar, contrasted sharply with the red covering of his chair; and the legs, clad in silk stockings, with the unusually small feet, encased in low, gold-buckled shoes, were crossed lazily.

His appearance and attitude bore out Greloire's remark, — that it was said the emperor was "strangely indifferent

to everything." Every line of the listless face and relaxed form indicated this.

As the ex-soldier approached and bowed low, a faint smile lightened Napoleon's repellent expression, and he said graciously, "Greluire, I am pleased to see you, and to know that you have not forgotten one who thought highly of you in more prosperous days."

The kindly manner and words produced a marked effect upon Greluire, who seemed scarcely able to control the emotion showing in his voice as he exclaimed fervently, "Ah, Sire, I would let out my life-blood to bring back those days to you!"

"So, my old comrade?" And, for a second, a pleased light warmed the gray eyes. "Thine was ever a true heart, and years have taught me the value of such. But," he added, with a return of his former manner, and looking at Lafitte, "who is this you bring with you?"

"Sire, Captain Jean Lafitte, of Louisiana," answered Greluire, after a moment's hesitancy; and Lafitte, coming forward, bowed respectfully.

It required all his strength to hold in check the impulses now making him, man as he was, dizzy and unstrung. He had, after bowing, drawn himself up to the full of his unusual stature, and stood erect and graceful, his eyes bent downward upon the emperor, and holding a look which was, of itself, an appeal for recognition.

Every instinct and craving of his nature, impelled by all the remembrances of his youth and all the desires of his manhood, made him long to break through the icy reserve that kept him aloof, and to throw himself at the feet of this man, so changed outwardly, but still worshipped as of old, and beseech the cold eyes to look upon him with the long-ago confidence and love.

"Jean Lafitte," Napoleon repeated slowly, looking, not at the former, but at Greluire. "I have heard the name before, but not to the wearer's credit. I ask you, Greluire," — and his voice took a yet icier note, — "you, who are his

sponsor, why Captain Jean Lafitte, of Louisiana, dare present himself before me?"

Greloire flushed deeply, and seemed at a loss for a reply. But not so Lafitte. The emperor's words, uttered in a tone whose measured calmness suggested a mingling of annoyance and contempt, acted as does the lancet of a surgeon when it gives freedom to congested blood. They brought to Lafitte, tensioned as he was in mind and heart, a relief such as could have come through no other agency, for they swept away the glamour of boyish sentiment, and restored his manliness and individuality.

"I, Jean Lafitte, will answer your question, Sire; I, Jean Lafitte, of Louisiana! And I say to the man whom my boyish heart adored, and whom my man's heart loves, that I dare present myself to him because I wish to offer for his acceptance all I have of property and life."

As these bold words poured forth pulsing with passion, Napoleon's first look of surprised anger gradually gave place to a more pacific expression, — one which Greloire, who had been listening in alarmed amazement, was relieved to see.

"I have ships, gold, men, at my command," Lafitte continued, with no lessening of vehemence; "and all these, with my own life, are his, if he can find use for them."

He stopped, and, with heaving breast and flashing eyes, looked down into Napoleon's immobile face, while Greloire, still apprehensive, divided his glances between the two — speaker and listener.

There was a short silence, and one that seemed heavy, after the passionate voice had ceased. Then an icy tone made sharp contrast as the emperor said, "These ships, men, and gold, Captain Lafitte — how is it that you come to have them?"

There was a slight drooping of Lafitte's head, and he did not reply.

"Were the ships and gold inherited by you, or gained in honorable trade, or were they captured in recognized war-

fare?" the pitiless voice continued. "Or perhaps they were given to you by the state or country you have served, as a reward for duty, or valor. And your followers—the men of whom you speak,—will you describe to me the flag under which they fight?"

Lafitte found it difficult to control himself—to make his voice and bearing accord with the respect he felt, and had but now expressed, for the man whose sarcastic calm turned back the impetuous torrent of his feelings. But the tone in which he replied was quiet, although husky with repressed emotion.

"Despite, Sire, the tales which have distorted my name and acts, and which I perceive have reached your ears to prejudice you against me, I claim that what I have of property was personally gained by legitimate means—in trading, and also by warfare which was perfectly honorable in its way. I freely admit that I have stooped to employ, for the attainment of my ends, men who might not be accredited with the honor I claim for myself. But, as to this, I ask you, Sire, who are sitting in judgment upon me, if you would like that the world should hold you strictly accountable for the morals of your soldiers, and for every act they committed?"

Greloire now laid a remonstrating hand upon Lafitte's arm; but it was shaken off impatiently as the latter advanced closer to the emperor, who, with eyes in which shone a half-amazed, half-angry light, was looking up into the glowing face above him.

"You know in your heart, Sire, without my presuming to tell you, that such a thing would be flagrant injustice. Yet it is this same injustice which you are heaping upon me, who come to you with no thought of palliating my faults—no wish to make myself appear better than I am, or may become. I have come with the same heart for whose love you once cared, to pray that you let me serve you, if I may, and die happy, in winning back the peace of mind a reckless boy threw away."

The words ceased, but their vibrations seemed to beat upon the air with an inspiring thrill, like that which comes from the sound of martial music.

"*Mon Dieu !*" murmured Greloire to himself. "If we had an army of such men the world might be conquered !"

A new light swept like a softening hand across Napoleon's austere face.

"Captain Lafitte, you are right," he said, with an entire change of voice and manner. "You are right, sir, and I ask your pardon."

He extended his hand ; and Lafitte, with a rush of new emotions, bowed deeply, and pressed it to his lips.

As he raised his head, the emperor's fingers tightened their clasp, and he rose to his feet.

"A man whose heart can treasure such love for me during all these many years is surely one who should not be misjudged," he said, looking up into the younger man's face ; "most surely not by me, and at such a time as the present."

He spoke as he might have spoken twenty years before, when addressing the boy Jean.

"The old days have never faded from my mind, nor has my heart lost the memory of what made the tie between us. I was pleased at the message you sent to me through Greloire, from Martinique, for it made me hope that, greatly as your environments had changed, your true nature remained the same ; and what you have now said gives me assurance of this."

As he uttered the final words he placed his arms around Lafitte's shoulders and embraced him.

"Sire !"

A volume of emotions spoke in that single word.

"Sire, my whole heart is grateful for these words of confidence and esteem." Then, with a quick change to bitter self-reproach, "No one can realize better than myself how grave was the mistake I made ; and no man would make greater sacrifices to undo it."

"Tut, tut, boy," replied Napoleon, with all his old air of affection, and tapping the shoulder upon which one of his hands still rested, "when you have reached my years you will know better than to waste time and thoughts in useless regrets. Thou wert tempted sorely, I make no doubt, and wert, after all, but a boy. And while I must wish thou hadst shown greater trust in me, and hadst stopped where I bade thee, still, all had to be as it was, and is; for such is destiny. Let the past go, Jean, my lad, and look only into the future."

The expression of the emperor's face, the tenderness of his voice, his use of the old-time manner of speech, — these combined to brim Lafitte's eyes with tears. But, annoyed at such a display of weakness, he passed his hand impatiently across his face.

"Perhaps it was destiny, Sire, as you say. But I would gladly give my life, and all I can ever hope for on earth, to undo the past. What I ask now is that you will permit me, by accepting my services, to sooner make the future as I wish it to be. You will, by doing this, give me the happiness of feeling that I can make some slight reparation for the past."

The emperor resumed his seat, and resting his hands upon the arms of the chair, stared straight before him, while Lafitte stood looking down at the seated form. Greloire, meanwhile, with entire disregard of appearances, had sought recourse to his handkerchief.

"You owe me no reparation," at length said Napoleon, lifting his eyes to the dark ones searching his face. "That is due to me from many men; but you are not one of them."

"Then, Sire, give me the privilege of serving you."

There was another pause, during which the emperor appeared to be engrossed in thought. Then, with a look of infinite sadness, he said, "Jean, I am utterly helpless to give you any opportunity of serving me."

"Helpless—helpless, Sire!" exclaimed Greloire ex-

Lafitte of Louisiana

Lafitte was about to
his hand.
because



citedly; and Lafitte was about to add something, when Napoleon raised his hand.

"Yes, helpless, because I am in the power of my enemies; helpless, because the allies have their hands upon the throat of France, and my armies are serving under the flag of the Bourbons."

"But, Sire!" expostulated Greloire, when what he would have said was checked by another imperious gesture.

"Not another word from either of you. Matters are as you know, and" — with a deep sigh — "my fortunes must be governed by them."

Another pause ensued, Napoleon lying back in his chair, and his two visitors looking at him in speechless despair. Then the murmur of voices in an adjacent room caused the emperor to rouse himself.

"It is not wise that you linger here," he said, dividing his look between Lafitte and Greloire; "for, to say nothing of mine, your own safety may be imperilled. Perhaps you are already regarded with suspicion. Jean, you will stop this night with Murier, and you shall hear from me again; but do not venture to come to me unless I send for you."

"And may I not do something for you?" urged Lafitte, making a final appeal.

Napoleon's lips curled with a smile that yet held a touch of mockery.

"What would you — stop here on Elba, and pace its shore, to count how many gulls you could see in an hour's time?"

"Aye, Sire, if you so command," was the reply from lips that smiled not.

The emperor uttered a mirthless laugh, and tapped the chair-arms impatiently.

"No — no; a truce to levity. Go, you and Greloire; you must leave me, for I feel it unwise that you remain another moment. You can do nothing — nothing, for me. But I am glad to have seen you — both of you; and I

thank you, Jean, my valiant ghost from the past, for your offer and your love."

The emperor, as he spoke, leaned forward in his chair; and there was a caress in his smile and tone, as well as in his touch upon Lafitte's hand.

"If ever a time should come, Sire, when I can serve you, may I have the honor and happiness of receiving your commands?" was asked longingly, as if with a new inspiration, begotten by the emperor's manner. But the latter, without answering the question, asked another.

"Shall you stop long in France?"

He, as also Greloire, watched Lafitte closely, until, after a moment's hesitation, the young man looked down frankly into Napoleon's face.

"Not for long, Sire — not now. But Greloire knows where any message can always reach me; and I shall live in the hope of receiving one. I must now return to Louisiana; but, Sire, believe me when I tell you that it will be as a changed Lafitte. You will never, in the future, have cause to think of me as you have heretofore — with any thought of reproach. And if I can find a way of wiping the stigma from the name of Lafitte, in Louisiana, I will do it."

Napoleon clasped his hand.

"And," continued the passion-shaken voice, "if ever you have need of me — ever want me, you have but to let me know."

"And you would come to me?"

"Come to you?" said Lafitte, in a tone so emphatic that the emperor made a gesture of warning. "Come to you?" he repeated, in a lowered voice, whose tenderness was vibrating. "Yes, Sire, through all the ships England might seek to interpose."

"If this be so, Jean, then perhaps you may some day hear from me. Meanwhile your adopted country (and I hope I may some time see it) is at war with England, my most implacable enemy; and the conflict may afford you

an opportunity for freeing the name of Lafitte from obloquy. And, when this is done, I would ask of you to assume again your rightful name — the one belonging to your father's title and estates."

Lafitte started slightly, and stared at the immobile face, whose gray eyes were looking off into space, as if the speaker were revolving some new line of thought.

"My father's name and estates, Sire? Surely these are but phantoms of the past, with which I, Jean Lafitte, can have no connection."

The speculative eyes turned a smiling glance upon him as the emperor said, "It is rarely a safe thing to aver what may or may not lie in the future. All I ask now is that you promise me that your lines of life, so far as you may be able to control them, shall be laid with the single idea of clearing the name by which you are known in Louisiana, and with the intention of assuming, ultimately, the name borne here in France by the boy I loved. I ask this for your own sake, and also because of my interest — stronger than I think you now realize — in your future."

Now taking Lafitte's hand, he added, —

"You, who seem so desirous of serving me — cannot you promise me this?"

"Indeed, yes, Sire," was the fervent answer, as the speaker bent to touch with his lips the hand pressing his own.

"Be it so. Now" — and the clasping hand released its hold — "you must leave me; and be sure to remember my wish that you remain with Murier until you hear from me. Good-night, Greloire. Good-night, Jean; and do not forget how rejoiced I am that my De Soto has returned to me."

The words, with the old-time playful nickname, were spoken smilingly, yet with an earnestness which gave them, for Lafitte, the sound of a benediction.

The gray eyes and dark ones exchanged a last fleeting glance of parting as Lafitte, following Greloire from the

room, paused an instant in the doorway to look back. He then went out into the peaceful night, his nerves still feeling the clasp of Napoleon's fingers, and his mind haunted by the sadness of the smile which touched the calm face as the exiled emperor waved his hand in a final farewell.

CHAPTER THIRTY-SIX

LAFITTE, quartered in one of Madame Teche's dimity-hung chambers, slept little that night. He reviewed again and again the meeting with Napoleon, until his brain was in a turmoil of thought that banished sleep. Then, too, as he wondered why he and Greloire had been told to await some further communication from the emperor, the idea of a contemplated attempt to escape suggested itself, starting a wild consideration of possibilities in the way of decision and action.

If the emperor would go to America, might not he, Lafitte, be the means of getting him there in safety?

He would find no empire there for his ruling, except such as lay in the hearts that would welcome and protect him; but he could, at least, be free from the insulting espionage of England.

Before parting for the night Greloire had said, in answer to Lafitte's question as to the probable cause of their detention, "Something has come to me which, strangely enough, I had forgotten; and this it may be that lies at the bottom of the emperor's command that we wait until we hear from him. But be patient, *mon ami*, until you shall know his message."

It was late when Greloire went to sleep, still half-conscious of the footsteps in the room next to his own; and he awoke to see Lafitte standing by his bedside.

"*Sacre*—is it morning so soon?" he inquired sleepily, blinking at the sunlight stealing through the window.

"It is scarcely an hour after sunrise, Greloire, and I regret to disturb you. But a messenger has just left a

package with me, together with a written message from the emperor, requesting that you and I leave the island now, as speedily as possible."

"So?" said Greloire, rubbing his eyes. "Then it is best that I leave this comfortable bed. Will you ascertain from Murier what may be the prospect for breakfast?"

Lafitte departed; and it was not long before Greloire joined him below, where he was alone, pacing the veranda.

Stretching himself vigorously, and yawning as he inhaled the fresh morning air, Greloire stood a moment looking off to where Murier was talking with some laborers. Then, turning to face Lafitte as the latter was walking past him, he asked, "Did you say the emperor sent you a packet?"

"Yes. And when I tore off the outer wrapping, I found upon the inner one his request that I should not examine it until we had left the island. What do you suppose can be the meaning of this?"

Lafitte had come to a standstill, and stood leaning against one of the veranda posts, facing Greloire, who regarded him in silence for a moment before he answered musingly, "I do not know, but suspect that I might make a fairly good guess."

"What mean you?"

"Wait, *mon ami*; wait until you open the packet. Then I must tell you something that has escaped my mind until now. But," he added, after glancing toward the door, while a smile of satisfaction beamed over his face, "I have heard our emperor say that the best thing to do was the next thing to do; and now it is our breakfast that is the best and next, for here is Madame Teche."

Murier too, who was now ascending the veranda steps, hailed Greloire. Lafitte he had seen already, having taken the package to his chamber.

Breakfast was soon despatched; and, after thanking Madame Teche for her hospitality, her guests took their leave, pursued, until out of hearing, by voluble farewells and urgings to come again.

Murier walked with them to the beach, which they found deserted, with the full tide rolling in over the pebbled sand in a hushed way, as if its mood were depressed.

Lafitte, drawing a scarlet handkerchief from his pocket, waved it above his head; and the master of the fishing-smack replied with a speedy hulloa that came faintly across the water.

"Shall you go back to the Italian shore, Félix?" Murier inquired.

"Hum — I don't know," began Greloire, who had not thought of the matter before; and Lafitte added, "I shall try and persuade the old fellow to sail straight for Cannes. I think he will do this, if I make it worth his while; and I feel that I must return as speedily as possible to my ship."

A rowboat had put off from the smack, and was being pulled rapidly shorewards, where the three stood watching it.

"Félix, shall you go straight home?" asked Murier.

"Yes; and I wish you would come with me."

Murier shook his head, and there was a deepening of the shadow upon his face.

"Thank you, old comrade. I should like to do so; and yet — not. I doubt if ever I leave Elba, — ever again see France."

"Nonsense, man," Greloire said brusquely, laying an arm across Murier's shoulder. "What is to keep you from coming to visit me soon, and for long?"

"Perhaps you may come to Louisiana some day," suggested Lafitte; "in which case I promise you a warm welcome."

Murier thanked him, and then added, with an abruptness quite out of keeping with his usual manner, "Have you always lived in America, Monsieur le Capitaine? Pray excuse me if I seem to ask what I should not; but you seem one of ourselves in your ways, and" — his voice fell — "in your love for our emperor."

Lafitte hesitated, and glanced at Greloire; but the latter

seemed absorbed in watching the approaching boat, and, having relit his cigar, had walked along the shore to the point for which the craft was evidently making.

Lafitte now resolved to give rein to the impulse swaying him; and laying a hand on Murier's arm, he said, "I was born in France, and am one with you in love for the emperor and France. And I wish to tell you now, Murier, before I leave, that you are no stranger to me, nor should I be one to you."

Murier stared in surprise.

"Can you see nothing familiar about me?" And Lafitte, smiling, bent his head nearer to the eyes searching his dark face as if challenging a memory.

But Murier shook his head.

"Then I will help you. Can you recall one night in the days of the 'bonnet-rouge,' when, at a château in Languedoc, you were wounded in a fight with the peasants, and the emperor — then Lieutenant Bonaparte — had a young friend there? And do you remember how, later, in Toulon, the morning after the city was taken, your commander sent you to find that same boy?"

"*Ciel!*" exclaimed Murier, his face brightening. "Now I recall it — all of it. The same eyes are yours, to be sure, and he might, when a man grown, look like you. Am I to understand, Monsieur le Capitaine, that you are the boy?"

"Yes."

"Ah," said Murier, drawing a long breath, "I see now — I understand how it is that you came; and I am all the happier to have had you for my guest. It is an old love, even as is mine," he added softly, extending his hand, "that brought you here."

"All my life, since I was a lad, have I loved him."

The sound of Greloire's whistling now came to them. He was pacing the beach, and performing the "Marseillaise," — the latter being an air to which he would never have dared give sound in his house at Bordeaux.

"I remember it all now, Monsieur le Capitaine," said Murier, — "all but your name, which seems unfamiliar to me."

"Well, never mind; know me now as Captain Lafitte. And let me hope you will not forget me, nor that if ever you come to Louisiana I shall be most happy to see you."

The fisherman had beached his boat near Greloire, who now called to them, and stood waiting as they strolled along to join him.

"Indeed, Monsieur le Capitaine — Lafitte," replied Murier, smiling as he uttered the name, "I shall not forget. Thank you for the promised welcome; and let me say again how very glad I am to have had the honor of entertaining you. But I am not likely to leave Elba soon, if ever." And he glanced at his empty sleeve.

As Greloire clasped his hand in farewell, Murier asked reproachfully, "Why did you not tell me about Monsieur le Capitaine — who he was? Can it be that you had reason to distrust an old comrade?"

"*Hélas*, Murier," was the half-jesting reply. "I must ask of thee in turn if trust in an old comrade is lost in thee, not to know that he has good reasons for all he does, or does not."

A faint smile and a warm hand-pressure constituted the only reply; and, after repeating his invitation, Greloire followed Lafitte into the boat, which Murier helped the fisherman to push off, and then stood, a lonely figure on the beach, while the stretch of water widened between himself and his late guests.

As Lafitte had surmised, the captain of the smack was easily induced to land his passengers on the French coast; and they were scarcely under way before the former, asking Greloire to accompany him, went below, to open the package.

It was somewhat bulky, and as his fingers broke the last wrapping, a collection of papers, some of them discolored

by years, others evidently of more recent date, fell upon the cabin table. And in their midst shone the dull gold frame of an ivory-painted miniature.

For a second Lafitte stared at this; then, picking it up, he looked intently at the gypsy-like face of the portrait.

The dark eyes, so like his own, seemed to hold an appeal in their soft depths, and the small mouth, with its dimpled corners, to ask, "Have you forgotten me?"

"Ah, *mon Dieu!* How came the emperor by this?" he cried chokingly, the sight of the beautiful face, which Margot had taught him to love as the mother whom he had never known, making the past more real than the present.

Greloire, who was lighting a cigar, said dryly, "Examine the papers, and if they do not tell you, perhaps I can do so."

Lafitte glanced at them hurriedly. They comprised his parents' marriage-certificate, and all the other papers, together with the jewels, that had been in the small iron box so many years ago. There were also more recent papers, showing that the property in Languedoc had been released from sequestration, and held in trust by Napoleon, emperor of France, for "Jean, son and heir of the Baron —, and sometime known as Jean Lafitte, of Louisiana, in North America."

All the documents were there, showing in detail the legal proceedings, instituted and perfected under the Consulate, and confirmed under the Empire.

As the last paper fell from his hand, Lafitte buried his face in his crossed arms amid the heap of precious things upon the table.

"*Mon Dieu!* — ah, *mon Dieu!* To think — yes, to know that he has so well remembered me during all these years — so well guarded my interests! And I — the black-hearted ingrate that I have been!"

"Said I not always, *mon ami*, that he is one who never forgets?" asked Greloire, with some emotion, and using his handkerchief with a vigorous sound that seemed to

serve the purpose of a safety-valve for relieving that which made his kindly eyes moist.

"Aye, indeed, most truly. But think — think, man, how it would have been could I but have known!"

"We all make mistakes, my good Jean," said Greloire, with an air which held an odd mixture of philosophy and commiseration; "and yours is to be pardoned as the mistake of a hot-headed boy. Recall how he looked at and spoke to thee last evening, and do not despair."

Lafitte made no reply; and it was not until after a long silence that he spoke again.

"I cannot yet understand," he said, now more calmly, "how the emperor came to have these things in his keeping — this miniature of my mother, these jewels, and the papers, all of which my father gave into Margot's charge. They were in the box that was hidden away under the hearth of her cottage in Toulon, and were left there. Père Huot asked me about the box; but I could recall nothing in regard to it after that terrible night."

Greloire took several vigorous puffs at his cigar, and straightened himself in his chair.

"I think I can explain the mystery," he began, with the manner of one contemplating an extended recital; "and I wonder greatly that I should have forgotten to tell you of this matter. When our emperor — General Bonaparte he was at the time — sent me to Toulon, expecting me to return bringing you with me, he told me of Père Huot having written to him about the loss of a certain box of papers, important to you and your future, and which presumably had been left behind in your cottage, which was burned. The emperor bade me discover, if possible, and in any way I might see fit, whether or not the box was really destroyed, as he hoped that some one, having found or stolen it, might be induced to restore it if bribed by a reward offered in his name. Père Huot had written him of the box having been hidden, as you have said, by Dame Margot, under a loose brick of the hearth.

"I found the ruins of the cottage. But it was of no avail to seek there for the box, as I ascertained that Père Huot had undertaken a like thing, with no result. I talked unreservedly, telling many people of the box, and of General Bonaparte's wish to regain it, offering in his name a generous reward if the finder would bring it to me. After a few days a woman brought me a small iron box, still locked, and showing the effects of heat. She told me she had been a neighbor of Dame Margot, and that in searching the ruins she had found the box. I questioned her closely, and became satisfied that she had feared to speak of the matter, lest she might be accused of theft; and, reluctant to destroy it, and not daring to try and open it, she had kept it hidden away for two years.

"I took it to the emperor, and he broke the lock in my presence; and after glancing over the contents, he told me that my mission had been successful. I remember seeing that picture among the papers he took from the box; and he held it near me, as he looked at it, so that I could see the lovely face. It is not the face any man would forget, Jean; and it holds a look of thyself."

Lafitte said nothing; and Greloire continued: "To me the matter was but one of many, in those busy days—not a matter for long remembrance; and I thought no more of it until this morning, when you spoke of the packet, and wondered what it might contain. May I see the picture again?"

He now spoke more softly, and stretched out his hand for the miniature.

"It is a rarely beautiful face," was his low-spoken criticism.

Lafitte, meanwhile, had risen, and was moving restlessly about the narrow space of the cabin.

All the past was rolling in upon him, a sea of living reality, so distinct and intense that the present appeared dim and vaporous.

What had, but last night, seemed to him legitimate in

the light of his every-day world, as he met its events, now looked honor-stained when confronted with the appealing sweetness of the pictured face that had represented to his boyhood all that was best and purest, and the present sight of which had brought so vividly before his mental vision the dimmed face of faithful Margot, and that proud, stately man he had known as father, of whom he could recall no word or act dictated by other than a sense of the highest honor toward his fellows, and the most tender love for his younger son.

And Bonaparte, the idol of his youthful heart, but for so many years doubted and mistrusted, — he had obtained and treasured these proofs of the wayward boy's position as that father's son and heir, while the son himself was risking in alien lands the sacrifice of his rightful name and heritage !

An anguished silence kept him mute ; and Greloire, as if understanding this, said nothing.

CHAPTER THIRTY-SEVEN

ON the fourth morning after reaching Toulon, the two arrived at Bordeaux, where they found Greloire's household in a high state of excitement, with the prefect of police awaiting its master's return.

Sometime during the previous night the house had been entered through a window on the lower floor. Nothing had apparently been stolen; but, in the morning, the Indian, Ehewah, was found dead in his bedroom upon the upper floor.

The body had not been disturbed, but lay as when discovered. The hands were clinched tightly, the eyes were wide open, and the throat was cut literally from ear to ear.

As Lafitte and Greloire looked silently at the awful sight, the former drew away the light cotton shirt from over the dead man's breast, and showed, directly over the heart, two deep gashes, forming a rude and bloody cross. It was a symbol of the Baratarians, and signified that the doom of a traitor had been sealed.

This was a confirmation of Lafitte's suspicions. But he imparted nothing to Greloire, and soon left the house, to return to the "Black Petrel," where he was greeted joyously by old Lopez, who reported the cargo discharged, and himself waiting orders.

To Lafitte's outburst in regard to the tragedy ashore, and his demand for an explanation, the ex-gunner stared; a manifest perplexity proving his own ignorance of the affair.

He admitted that Ezra had been missing since the previous afternoon, and said that the Arab had, three days before, come aboard and told, with much excitement, of having seen Ehewah, and of the latter fleeing from him; also of how he had followed the Indian, and ascertained his probable place of abode.

Some of the crew had been loud in vows of vengeance for Ehewah's treachery, whereupon he — Lopez — had told them of Lafitte's parting commands, adding that if he himself could, for the moment, swallow his own desire for meting out punishment, they should surely be able so to do.

They had all, Ezra included, appeared to acquiesce in this, although Lopez admitted that the Arab had, ever since, seemed unusually silent and sullen.

"It was surely he who did it, my captain," the old man said in conclusion; "for there was ever bad blood between him and Ehewah. Ezra was nearest the old captain before the Indian saved his life from the snake; and you will remember how jealous the two always seemed to be of each other. 'T was Ezra, beyond a doubt, who made the cross, for he has been missing since yesterday; and I think we shall never see him again, for he knows that he has broken your orders."

The prediction proved correct, for nothing more was ever heard of the Arab.

Before the week had ended the "Black Petrel" filled her sails for Baratavia, with Greloire's parting words of advice repeating themselves in Lafitte's ears: —

"Wind up your affairs in Louisiana, *mon ami*, and do as the emperor desires — return to France, and assume your own name and rank."

So back to Louisiana he sailed, with his mind in a turmoil that gave unwonted austerity to his manner, and awed his crew into much speculation.

The fever of his first impulse having now abated, he began to upbraid himself for having left Pierre, and won-

dered if anything evil might have befallen his foster-brother. Day by day, as the "Black Petrel" drew nearer to Barataria, he kept himself busy by querying as to what, if any, changes would be found there, and as to what progress the war had made.

Louisiana, and especially New Orleans, must, in his judgment, be destined to bear a share in the conflict, even though this might not be until the eleventh hour; for the possession of the Mississippi and its valley had, for many years, been a dream of Great Britain's ambition.

Night and day, thinking matters over, he resolved that his next step would be to gather what he might of men and shipping and wealth, and, in the hope of wiping all stigma from his name, offer these to the Governor of Louisiana, for use in warring against the English. And the possibility of this opportunity being afforded him, with its reward—a pardon for himself and men, covering all past offences—the rehabilitation of himself before his world, made his blood tingle.

This accomplished, he would return to France, assume his father's name and rank, and stand ready to serve the emperor.

And the Island Rose,—how had she been faring all this time, and what, amid the changed conditions he was mapping out for himself, would be her place?

The remembrance of the last time he had seen her, with her girlish face and form manifesting such shrinking terror of him, had its sorrow now lightened by the hope, so strong in his heart, that he would be able to redeem himself in her estimation. And his love—the first he had known for a woman, was so intense that he was not capable of serious doubt as to his ability to win, even though the present held so little promise of success.

CHAPTER THIRTY-EIGHT

THE "Black Petrel," keeping a sharp lookout for English vessels, stole into the Gulf of Mexico, and sped across it. Then, turning to the east and north, Lafitte made for the western shore of Grande Terre and the harbor of Barataria, where, in due time, the brigantine dropped anchor.

The voyage had been a speedy one and made in safety, although Lafitte now learned that several English vessels had been seen off the mouths of the Delta.

It was the evening of his arrival. He and Pierre were alone together, and, being able to count upon unlimited privacy, they seated themselves for a full talk and comparison of notes, — Jean to give Pierre the particulars of his recent trip, and to hear from him an account of the happenings at Barataria and New Orleans.

"I wish I might have been with you in Toulon," Pierre said, with what sounded like a sigh, as he stretched his legs to the hearth, where a bright fire blazed to dispel the gathering dampness of the September night.

Jean, on the other side of the fireplace, shot a quick glance at the moody face opposite, while Pierre, now with folded arms and chin sunk on his broad chest, stared into the flames.

"Art homesick for France, my brother?" the former asked softly, using the old-time tongue in which these two always spoke to one another in moments of unusual feeling.

Pierre's face changed at once; he smiled, and looked up.

"I never thought so, Jean; but perhaps it may be that I am. Certain it is that I have a longing to see France again before I die."

"Before you die!" repeated Jean, a slight touch of testiness in his tone. "Why do you talk thus? One would think you were three-score, at least, instead of a stalwart giant of half those years;" and he laughed, half-playfully, half-deridingly.

There was no answering smile on Pierre's face, which was again turned to the fire. But after a momentary silence he said, abstractedly, as if thinking aloud, "I cannot give a good reason for it, but there has of late been something like a conviction growing upon me that I have not much longer to live. I have tried to shake it off by working; and the preparations for sailing to France, with the idea of joining you there, seemed to help me in the effort. Perhaps" — and he raised his eyes to Jean's wondering face — "it is nothing more than you suggest — that I am homesick."

"We will wind up our affairs here and go to France," declared Jean decisively. "Rouse thyself, Pierre, and speak no more in such a fashion. What nonsense! — thou, after all the dangers we have met and overcome together, to have such a premonition! I think, my brother," and the tone brought a gratified sparkle to the other man's eyes, "that thou hast missed me."

"Missed thee! Aye, in every way, as I ever do when we are apart. But somehow it was a taste worse this time, perhaps because thou wert away in France, where, as thou hast said, I am growing homesick to go."

"And, as I have also said, we will go together, and soon. We will return to Languedoc, thou and I, Pierre, and see the old gardens, and roam in the park, and try to be boys once more." The words ended with a joyous laugh.

"And read of De Soto, and Pizarro, and the tales of Louisiana?" added Pierre interrogatively, a curious sadness touching his voice.

"Nay, indeed not," replied Jean, sobering at once. "We have lived too many practical chapters of a like sort, my Pierre, to ever again enjoy the old book."

"And the emperor," said Pierre irrelevantly; "to think of his keeping the little box of papers for thee!"

"Yet it was like him to do such a thing," asserted Jean, with vibrant tone and glowing face. "Ah, if but he were back in France, and free from those cursed English!"

"Aye," Pierre affirmed, a growl sounding in his voice. "The English there on Elba, their power behind the throne of France, and their ships sneaking in here to snatch at Louisiana and the Mississippi. Cursed English, say I."

From what Pierre told him that night, Jean Lafitte knew, as clearly as though he had remained at Barataria, all that had transpired since his departure.

This had been shortly after General Andrew Jackson defeated the Creek Indians at the battle called "Tohopekah," — a disaster that broke their power, and compelled the English to cease reckoning upon them as allies. And after this signal victory General Jackson had been given command of the Seventh Military District, which included the State of Louisiana.

It was now very evident that New Orleans was to be attacked as soon as the English could concentrate a sufficient force for that purpose; and Governor Claiborne had called a session of the legislature, besides taking all other measures in his power toward raising means for defence. But the legislators were slow to co-operate with him; and the same malcontents whose scheming had already wrought such harm to Louisiana were using all possible means to neutralize the governor's efforts.

As Lafitte listened to all this, he congratulated himself anew that the "Black Petrel" lay anchored safely before Grande Terre. He felt also that no time could have been more auspicious for making the offer he proposed to lay before the governor, — an offer of service by himself and his followers, in consideration of pardon for all past misdeeds, whether actual or alleged.

When he voiced these thoughts and plans to Pierre, the

latter agreed unreservedly; and both men were confident of their ability to obtain the acquiescence of their followers.

"But think you, Jean," inquired the more cautious Pierre, "there is not reason to doubt if Governor Claiborne accept our offer? I do not wish to dampen thy ardor; but we must remember the threats he has made against the Baratarians."

"He surely will not make the mistake of refusing our services in such an emergency—at a time when every man able to bear a gun will be sorely needed in New Orleans," was Jean's confident reply; and Pierre raised no more doubts that night.

Among the other items of information he had given (and which, although of slight interest to himself, were otherwise to his listener), was that Count de Cazeneuve had, at La Roche's invitation, closed his house in New Orleans, and gone with his granddaughter for a visit to the former's plantation, La Tête des Eaux, near the head of Bayou Bienvenu; also that La Roche had taken this occasion to persuade his ward, the Señorita Lazalie, to join his house party.

"He is now a general in the state militia," Pierre added; "and"—with a laugh—"it is common talk in New Orleans that he is mad for love of the Spanish girl."

"And she?" inquired Jean carelessly, as he patted the head of a hound crouched by his chair.

Pierre shrugged his broad shoulders.

"She is a woman; who, therefore, may say what she thinks, or will do—or not do?"

Jean laughed as he knocked the ashes from his cigar.

"Thou hast a poor opinion of the fair ones, my Pierre."

"Have I? If so, it was thyself taught me the lesson."

The laughing face sobered at once, and a troubled look came into the eyes fixed upon Pierre's half-mocking ones.

"Say you, Pierre, that I taught you any such lesson?"

"Aye, that you have, with your scorn of women and

their ways. Seeing through your eyes, I long ago learned to look upon women as but snares, to love whom brings mischief and the ruin of a man's heart."

Pierre wondered at the gentleness of the tone that answered, "If ever I taught you such a thing, I taught, and unknowingly, something I never believed myself; for I think a true woman is a thing to reverence as the saints, and that love in a man's life is like—" He stopped short, and his dark face took a dreaming look as he gazed into the fire.

After a short silence he continued, "The lack of love in a man's life is like a world without sunshine, or a lamp without oil—without light. And to live always in darkness would make life little worth the living."

Pierre had been staring at him, and as he stared his slumbering wits awakened.

In a groping but certain way, he began to rightly suspect the possible cause of a hitherto puzzling change he had noticed in his foster-brother, and, satisfied as to this, he now blurted out, "Jean, my brother, tell me—who is she you love?"

Jean started, and his brows contracted in a frown.

"Thou art not angry with me, that I asked?"

"Angry!" The word was repeated with a soft laugh, as if the supposition were too absurd to call for refutation.

"And she loves thee in return?" Pierre ventured, encouraged by the laugh.

Jean shook his head, and a bitter sadness touched the still smiling lips.

"Not love thee!" exclaimed Pierre incredulously. "Then she must be blind, or a fool," he added, in sudden wrath.

"Neither the one nor the other, my Pierre," Jean answered, as he rose from his chair. "I had never thought to ask her love, nor knew that I loved her, when, by accident, she discovered that I was the terrible pirate, Lafitte, and shrank from me as if I had been the plague, or death

itself. That was long ago; and I have not since laid eyes on her."

There was a world of suppressed passion sounding underneath the ring of mockery in his voice, and Pierre saw his hand tremble as he laid his arm against the stone support of the chimney and looked down into the embers.

Pierre now rose and tossed his cigar into the fireplace, appearing to think there was nothing more to be said. But he turned quickly to Jean as the latter, laying a hand upon his foster-brother's shoulder, added, "You know my secret, Pierre; for the present let it rest where it is, and give no heed as to who she is. I may yet win her; and I may not. If I do, then you shall know her, and you will love her; of that I feel assured."

"Well may you, my Jean, if she is dear to thee; for that she must now be to me."

"Aye; and God bless thee for a true other self," said Jean, grasping the other's hand. "That I could know, without the telling. Still, it is pleasant to hear thee say it. I will clear my name, Pierre — thine and mine; that must be first. After that — we shall see."

CHAPTER THIRTY-NINE

THE following day, Lafitte, accompanied by Pierre and Nato, made a hasty trip to Shell Island, where he found all as he had left it, and received a hearty welcome from his followers. But when, early in the afternoon, he returned to Grande Terre, it was to a scene of great excitement.

An English war-ship — a brig — was to be seen in the offing, and a boat from it, bearing a white flag, was approaching the island.

Lafitte, with his usual alertness of thought and act, bade his men do nothing, and, leaving Pierre in charge of them, went himself in a boat to meet the stranger, which — as he saw through a glass — held, besides its crew, two officers in the English naval uniform.

The two boats soon met; and there ensued an interchange of fierce glances between their crews. But the eyes of the English sailors were lively with curiosity as well as enmity, as they stared at the bared heads, brawny arms, and hairy chests of the swarthy Baratarians, who, for their part, indulged in looks filled with the hatred to which they were unable to give audible expression.

The officers introduced themselves as Captains Lockyer and McWilliams, of His Majesty's navy, bearers of a message from Colonel Nicholls, commander of the forces in Florida, to Captain Jean Lafitte, "Commandant at Barataria."

"I will take the message, gentlemen," said Lafitte, when they had stated their errand, "as it is not quite possible that you will be permitted to land on the island."

At this the officers conferred with each other in low tones; then the one who had introduced himself as Captain Lockyer, and who was the senior of the two, addressed himself to Lafitte.

"We cannot do this," he said, while the tide drifted the unfriendly boats closer to one another. "Our orders are to see Captain Lafitte himself, and to place the message in his hands; and it is of the greatest importance to him, as well as to ourselves, that we see him personally."

"Very well, gentlemen; be it so," replied Lafitte. "But in that case I must insist, for your own welfare, that you go ashore in my boat, leaving your own to lie off the island until this 'important business,' as you term it, is ended."

He spoke with cold courtesy; and his voice held the suggestion of a sneer.

The Englishmen again demurred.

"Either that or nothing," added Lafitte indifferently. "I cannot answer for your safety, nor for that of your crew, if you presume to land upon Grande Terre in any other manner."

After another and shorter talk together, the officers, with manifest reluctance, consented to this; and as the boats were brought side by side, bare brown arms and blue-clad ones united in holding them steadily, so that the officers might board the Baratarian craft, while black eyes and blue glared threateningly into each other.

"Bid your men keep off shore, and await your orders," said Lafitte authoritatively, as they rowed away.

This Captain Lockyer did, and his boat fell astern, following slowly in the wake of the other.

The outlaws, wondering and excited, and with arms ready for use, stood watching the returning boat, wherein the hated English uniforms showed in seeming friendliness with their own fellows and leader. But when Lafitte stepped ashore, he bade them disperse, and motioned his guests to precede him up the pathway leading from the beach.

They lost no time in doing this, scrutinized keenly by the resentful and still puzzled outlaws, who, when the scarlet uniforms disappeared inside the fort with Lafitte, began muttering among themselves as to the meaning of this strange proceeding.

"Your commandant has a snug retreat here," remarked Captain McWilliams, glancing about the room into which he and his companion had been ushered — the "living-room" of the house occupied by the two Lafittes.

"It serves," was Lafitte's curt reply, as he motioned his visitors to be seated.

"I must beg of you to hasten and inform Captain Lafitte of our arrival," said Captain Lockyer, with pompous dignity. "Our time is valuable, young sir, and we have much to talk over with your commandant."

These words seemed to make but little impression upon Lafitte; for, going to a buffet at one end of the room, he took from it several cut-glass decanters and glasses, which, together with a large silver box filled with cigars, he placed upon the table.

"Permit me to offer you a glass of wine, or brandy, gentlemen," he said, waving his hand toward the table; "and then you might care to join me in a cigar."

"Thank you — no," replied Captain Lockyer stiffly, while the other officer shook his head. The former then added impatiently, "We have no time to waste. We came here to talk — not to drink nor smoke; and we wish to see your commandant."

"As you please," said Lafitte, in no wise disturbed by his guests' impatience, for he seated himself near the table and took a cigar from the box. "Then you may proceed to talk, for I am at your service."

The two Englishmen glanced uneasily at each other; and Captain Lockyer, growing redder of face, replied angrily, "Our business is not with subordinates, but with Captain Lafitte himself, — Captain Jean Lafitte, the commandant at Barataria."

"So you have informed me already, and that is why I ask you to proceed; for I am Jean Lafitte, the 'commandant' — if such I may be called — at Barataria."

Both officers stared at him in undisguised amazement. Then they again looked at one another, but now as if for mutual comfort, while they began to mumble confused apologies.

"Proceed," Lafitte repeated, paying no heed to their discomfiture, "for my time is quite as valuable as your own. What do you want with me, — what can any English colonel have to say to Jean Lafitte of Louisiana that Jean Lafitte can care to hear?"

Leaning back in his chair, he folded his arms, and, as he looked steadily at the two men, suppressed enmity suggested itself in every feature of his handsome face.

They both started to speak, evidently anxious to placate, as speedily as might be, this self-contained outlaw the dignity of whose bearing had already impressed them strongly, and upon whose aristocratic personality they looked with secret astonishment, recalling the tales they had heard of his fearlessness and ferocity.

"One at a time, gentlemen, if you please," he now said, smiling coldly, as both officers began to address him.

Captain McWilliams, drawing himself up with much dignity, became silent, and his senior asked, with seeming incredulity, "You are really the commandant — Captain Lafitte?"

"I have told you that I am Jean Lafitte, whom Colonel Nicholls has seen fit to designate as the 'commandant' of this territory you have taken the risk of invading. Am I to understand that you wish witnesses called to identify me?"

"No; oh, no, — certainly not, Captain Lafitte," Lockyer made haste to declare in a most deprecatory tone. "Excuse me, I pray, if I showed any disposition to doubt your statement. But" — his face reddening — "you really seem so much younger a man than we had been led to look for, and — er — altogether so — altogether so —"

He floundered helplessly, and sank back in his chair, while Lafitte, deigning no reply, sat cold and erect.

"You will pardon me, I trust; I meant no offence," continued Captain Lockyer, running a hand through his scant wiry locks until the hair over his forehead stood up like the crest of an excited cockatoo.

"None is taken," replied Lafitte, with serenity; then, with a touch of impatience in manner and voice, "And, now that my identity is established to your satisfaction, proceed, if you please, Captain Lockyer, and tell me why you have done me the honor to seek me."

The officer, now more at ease, rose, and drawing from the pocket of his coat a sealed package, laid it upon the table, near where Lafitte's arm was resting as he looked steadily at the two men whose trappings represented to him the power that was holding caged upon Elba the man for whose liberty and life he would have sacrificed his own.

"There," said Captain Lockyer, resuming his seat, "is a most important communication, intrusted to us by Colonel Nicholls, for conveyance to your hands; what it contains will express, without further explanation from us, the nature of our mission. We have orders to await your answer."

A tall clock in one corner of the room now began striking the hour of five; and as the gong rang out, a miniature ship, upon a painted ocean, set under glass below the face of the timepiece, began to pitch as if from the force of a heavy sea. The two officers noticed it at once, and, smiling at each other, they rose, and crossing the room together, stood watching the little craft, which continued to roll for several minutes after the last stroke died away, to be followed by a tender melody which thrilled quaintly into the quiet air. And three hounds, who had not removed their suspicious eyes from the two strangers, now rose from where they had been lying, near the hearth, as a door opened and an old negro entered, with the apparent design of making a fire.

But he paused, and, like the hounds, eyed with small favor the scarlet and gold uniforms in front of the clock. His eyes then sought Lafitte, who was examining the papers delivered to him by Captain Lockyer.

Lafitte glanced scowlingly at the negro; but his tone was calm as he said, with a quick gesture of dismissal, "Never mind the fire at present, Scipio; and do not come here again until I call you."

The intruder appeared surprised; but he said nothing, and, after another unfriendly look at the officers, withdrew.

Captain McWilliams now seated himself upon the broad sill of a window, and after motioning his companion to join him, pressed the latter's arm as he glanced significantly at the only picture in the room, hanging over the fireplace, to which their backs had been turned.

The older man's eyes turned in the direction indicated, and rested upon a fine engraving of Napoleon. Lafitte had brought it home with him, a parting gift from Greloire; and he and Pierre had, only that same morning, hung it over the fireplace.

Captain Lockyer looked at it for a moment, then, pursing his lips, turned his eyes toward McWilliams, and the two men exchanged meaning glances.

Meanwhile, and apparently oblivious to their presence, Lafitte was perusing the papers. And, as he read, he was careful that his expression should not indicate the anger and disgust within him; for, absorbed as he seemed, he was yet keenly observant of every movement and look of the two officers.

The first paper ran as follows:

"I have arrived in the Floridas for the purpose of annoying the only enemy Great Britain has in the world, as France and England are now friends.

"I call on you, with your brave followers, to enter into the service of Great Britain, in which you shall have the grade of a captain; lands will be given to you all, in proportion to your respective ranks, on peace taking place, and I invite you on the following

terms : Your property shall be guaranteed to you, and your persons protected, in return for which I ask you to cease all hostilities against Spain, or the allies of Great Britain ; your ships and vessels to be placed under the orders of the commanding officer on this station, until your commander-in-chief's pleasure is known ; but I guarantee their value in all events.

"I herewith enclose you a copy of my proclamation to the inhabitants of Louisiana, which will, I think, point out to you the honorable intentions of my government. You may be a useful instrument in forwarding them ; therefore, if you determine, lose no time.

"The bearer of this, Captain McWilliams, will satisfy you on any other point you may be anxious to learn, as will Captain Lockyer, of the 'Sophia,' who brings him to you. We have a powerful reinforcement on its way here, and I hope to cut out some other work for the Americans than oppressing the inhabitants of Louisiana.

"Be expeditious in your resolve, and *rely on the verity of your* very humble servant."

Annexed to this were the instructions given to Captain Lockyer, of His Majesty's ship "Sophia," by his senior officer in the Gulf of Mexico, Sir W. H. Percy, captain of His Majesty's ship "Hermes ;" and these read :

"Having understood that some British merchantmen have been detained, taken into custody, and sold, by the inhabitants of Baratania, I have directed Captain Lockyer to proceed to that place and inquire into the circumstances, with positive orders to demand instant restitution, and, in case of refusal, to destroy to his utmost every vessel there, as well as to carry destruction over the whole place, and, at the same time, I have assured him of the co-operation or all His Majesty's forces on this station. I trust, at the same time, that the inhabitants of Baratania, consulting their own interest, will not make it necessary to proceed to such extremities. I hold out, at the same time, a war instantly destructive to them, and, on the other hand, should they be inclined to assist Great Britain, in her just war against the United States, the security of their property, the blessings of the British constitution ; and should they be inclined to settle on this continent, lands will, at the con-

clusion of the war, be allotted to them in His Majesty's colonies in America. In return for all these concessions on the part of Great Britain, I expect that the direction of their armed vessels will be put in my hands (for which they will be remunerated) ; also the instant cessation of hostilities against the Spanish government, and the restitution of any undisposed property of that nation.

“ Should any inhabitants be inclined to volunteer their services into His Majesty's forces, either naval or military, for limited service, they will be received ; and if any British subject, being at Baratavia, wishes to return to his native country, he will, on joining His Majesty's service, receive a free pardon.”

CHAPTER FORTY

WHEN he finished reading, which he had done with a rapidity suggestive of carelessness, Lafitte, who had absorbed every word, refolded the papers, placed them in their cover, and slipped the package inside his coat, while his visitors, seeing that he had finished, resumed their former seats; and Captain Lockyer was the first to speak.

"Now, Captain Lafitte, what have you to say to us, that we may report to Colonel Nicholls?"

He spoke cheerfully and confidently, as if there could be no doubt of Lafitte's ready acquiescence in the proposal.

Before the latter could reply, Captain McWilliams added, "It must surely be a most flattering outlook, that you are now given such an excellent opportunity to vindicate yourself and men in a proper and legitimate manner, after the continued falsehoods and misrepresentations of these Americans, who have even gone so far as to put a price upon your head, and imprison your brother."

At this Lafitte's black eyebrows lifted slightly.

"Imprison my brother?"

"Yes. Is it possible you did not know of it?" replied Captain Lockyer; and Captain McWilliams said, "We regret to be the first to inform you of this sad fact; but it is the truth. Your brother Pierre has been arrested, and locked up in the gaol at New Orleans."

To Lafitte this was truly a surprise, although scarcely of the nature his informants inferred. Had the statement been correct, he had every reason to know that New Orleans had no gaol strong enough to retain Pierre Lafitte as a prisoner. But, recalling his foster-brother as he left him

on the beach, with their men, and knowing him to be now waiting outside the house, he could not repress a smile as he said, "I think, gentlemen, that my brother can take care of himself; so we will not waste time in discussing his fate."

"That is for you to say," declared Captain Lockyer, with a bow from which his head was not raised before his brother-officer asked eagerly, "And you will accept the offer?"

"Do these papers cover the entire matter?" demanded Lafitte, ignoring the question.

"Not altogether," began Captain McWilliams; then he paused and looked at Lockyer, as if preferring that the latter should explain.

This he did by enlarging upon the manifest and great advantages to result for the "Baratarian commandant" and his followers by acceding to the proposition, entering the service of His Britannic Majesty, and placing all their vessels under the control of the English. He added, with much impressiveness, that, besides the rank of captain in the British navy, he was authorized to promise Captain Lafitte the sum of thirty thousand dollars in gold.

The latter listened silently, until Captain Lockyer had concluded. Then, with an unmistakable curl of his lip, he said, "Considering that your superiors accuse me of such high-handed proceedings, and demand of me such wholesale restitution, it seems somewhat curious that my possible services should be reckoned as worth so high a price."

"They know that few men are so familiar with the country hereabouts and the various approaches to New Orleans," Captain Lockyer explained. "The price is none too high for the assistance you are expected to render us. Our duty to our king and country demands that we use all measures for overcoming the Americans; and, as they are also your enemies, we urge you to join us in crushing them."

"Yes; some of them are truly my enemies," Lafitte ad-

mitted. "But you must understand that I have many friends amongst them."

"Even so," said Lockyer argumentatively. "And all, friends and enemies alike, will, in the end, respect you more highly if you seize this opportunity of establishing yourself properly before them."

A flash leaped into Lafitte's eyes; but it was instantly lost in a cold smile, as he replied, in a hard, incisive voice, "I am ignorant of the ethics by which Englishmen are governed; but I have lived for many years in America, and know its people well. And I have yet to learn that in this country a man ever gained the respect either of friends or enemies by committing an act of treachery."

The other men flushed, and it was evident that both were angered. But Captain McWilliams replied with forced calmness, "What we ask you to do can scarcely be called 'treachery,' Captain Lafitte. I understand that you are a Frenchman; and France and England are friends."

Lafitte's glance wandered to the picture over the fireplace, and rested there, while McWilliams continued, "This is America, a nation that has imprisoned your brother as its enemy, and has placed a price upon your own head. We, the friends of France, your native country, and seeking as well to be your own friends, come to you with an honorable proposition for the acquisition of your services, to enable us the better to put an end to this tiresome war, and inflict merited punishment upon our mutual enemy."

He spoke pompously, as one fond of listening to his own words, and concluded with a comprehensive wave of the hand, as if his argument were not to be refuted.

Lafitte, instead of replying, walked to the fireplace, and standing beneath the pictured face, whose eyes seemed to be regarding the group with cold intelligence, looked down at the two seated men. His hands were clasped behind him, and his eyes held a glitter that was menacing.

"Surely you must agree that Captain McWilliams speaks the truth," said the other officer, who had — although with an effort — now regained his composure.

"I admit that Captain McWilliams, from his own standpoint, argues the matter with ability," answered Lafitte, with an indifference which, more forcibly than words, showed his unwillingness for any discussion. "But" — tossing his head with a characteristic motion — "there is really nothing to be gained by talking of the rights or wrongs of your most flattering offer. I agree with you in saying that the matter is a most important one, for me, as well as for yourselves — so important to me that I cannot decide it as speedily as you seem to expect, but must have a few hours in which to give it proper consideration."

Both officers looked annoyed, and Captain McWilliams expostulated.

"How can you possibly need to reflect upon a proposal promising so much for you in the way of wealth and position, as against an enemy who has proscribed you, and branded you with infamy — has loaded your brother with chains, and imprisoned him as a malefactor?"

"It is very important," Captain Lockyer added, "that we lose no time in pushing the operations already planned against lower Louisiana. We must act at once; and as soon as we obtain possession here, our army will penetrate into the upper country, to make a junction with our forces from Canada."

"It would appear," said Lafitte, as he threw the remnant of his cigar into the fireplace and took another from the box, "that you count upon no possible failure in your plans."

"Failure!" repeated Captain Lockyer, his face glowing with confidence. "Indeed, no. Our plan of campaign is perfected, and we are certain of success; for there will be little or no opposition from the Spanish and French inhabitants of Louisiana, whose interests, as you will admit, are with us, rather than with the United States."

Lafitte did not comment audibly upon this sanguine picture, but smiled within himself to think how entirely the speaker was at fault.

He looked, however, as if he were revolving in his mind all that had been said, as he stood on the hearth, blowing the cigar-smoke from before his face.

The two officers seemed waiting for him to speak, until at last Captain Lockyer said, "Regarding our chances for success, I will tell you that we expect excellent results from an insurrection of the slaves, to whom we shall offer freedom as the reward for aiding Great Britain."

The cold indifference of Lafitte's face turned to sudden sternness.

"Do you know anything of the negro nature, and how it would show itself under such circumstances?" he demanded, adding, before they could answer him, "I do; and I warn you that what you propose doing would be equivalent to unchaining the demons of hell."

The Englishmen looked uncomfortable; but Lockyer muttered something about "the fortunes of war," and McWilliams said, "Considering the end we have in view, we cannot afford to be too particular as to the means we employ."

"So it would appear," replied Lafitte, with a cynical laugh, "when you come to Baratania and offer such flattering terms for my own services."

They remonstrated in one breath; and McWilliams, as if to avoid such an embarrassing topic, said, "But the cruelty of the negroes can add little, after all, to the punishment it has been decided to inflict upon New Orleans. The city is to be given over to fire and pillage."

This announcement, made with something of a dramatic air, did not seem to make the expected impression upon Lafitte; for he passed it by, and said, somewhat impatiently, and with unmistakable decision, "I repeat that I cannot answer you before morning; and such being the case, I must request that you remain here over night."

I promise to entertain you to the full extent of my poor ability. But I must insist upon your keeping strictly within this building — this very room, and letting me lock the door, as I cannot depend upon the mood of my men during the night. To them — many of them at least — the sight of a red uniform is the same as if they saw the entire population of a certain country toward which they have no very kindly feelings."

The two officers had risen, and now stood before him, their faces showing mingled consternation and anger.

"Are we to understand, sir, that this is your decision?" demanded Captain Lockyer excitedly.

"You are, unless you see fit to give up all further negotiations with me."

"Then I presume we are powerless to do other than accept your terms," said McWilliams, glancing at his senior, who nodded a grim assent.

"That is a matter, gentlemen, for your own decision," replied Lafitte, consulting his watch.

"And what of our crew, lying off shore?" inquired Captain Lockyer.

"In case you see fit to accept what I suggest," answered Lafitte, "you will send an order for them to return to the brig, and to come for you at noon to-morrow."

The tone of quiet authority accompanying the words appeared to leave no alternative for the British officers, who could only nod their assent, evidently deeming it more diplomatic to check the anger showing in their faces.

"Here are writing materials," Lafitte continued, in the same matter of fact way, "and if you will write the order at once, I will see that it is delivered to your crew."

Captain Lockyer wrote the order, and handed it to Lafitte, who put it in his pocket.

"Now, gentlemen," he continued, relaxing somewhat his austerity of manner, "it is understood that you are to be my guests for the night?"

"It would appear so," replied Captain McWilliams, with a poor attempt at heartiness, "although uninvited ones."

"And not particularly pleased at the prospect of enjoying Baratarian hospitality," Lockyer added with marked acerbity.

Lafitte smiled, and moved toward the door.

"That you are forced to do so is an accident I regret as much as do yourselves," he said. "But your experience must be classed with what you, a few minutes ago, called 'the fortunes of war,' Captain Lockyer; and I will endeavor to make it tolerable for you—at least so far as lies in my power. Now I must leave you; but I will place you in the care of Scipio, a faithful old servant, who will attend to your comfort. You must be ready for dinner?"

They bowed stiffly.

"Scipio will attend to this; and do not, I beg of you, hesitate in demanding all that our store affords. Meanwhile, you will find wine here, together with spirits and cigars. Honor me by doing full justice to them. And should you be inclined to read, you will find in that bookcase some works which may not be unfamiliar to you."

Calling the three hounds, he went out, closing the door after him; and the officers heard him lock it, and remove the key.

Scipio soon appeared with a lighted lamp. This he placed upon the table, and, taking no notice of those present, proceeded to work, with the result that, in a few minutes, a cheery fire was blazing. And, as the Englishmen drew their chairs to the hearth, the old negro closed and barred the heavy shutters, besides placing for the night an iron bar across the already locked door.

"We seem to be prisoners, rather than guests," remarked Captain McWilliams, in a tone too guarded for his words to reach the partially deaf ears of Scipio, who was busy at the table.

"It is a cheap price to pay, after all, if it results in bringing him over to us," said Lockyer, in the same low tone.

"Of that there can be no doubt," the younger man assented, as he unbuttoned his tightly fitting coat, and prepared to make himself comfortable. "He impresses me as being a man of unusually decided character—a very prince of outlaws."

"He certainly appears to have been painted blacker than his outward showing indicates."

Captain Lockyer made the admission with considerable reluctance, adding, with a caustic smile, "Those hands of his, and his manner, — the whole 'cut of his jib,' — suggest the idea of his being quite able to hand a lady her fan with the grace of a courtier; but they also suggest to me, at least, his ability to clutch an enemy by the throat and hurl him over a cliff, or make him walk the plank."

CHAPTER FORTY-ONE

HAVING emerged from the building, Lafitte saw, as he was locking the door, that many of his men, armed with guns, had gathered within the stockade, the greater number of them standing around another log-house at the farthest end, where two of his sub-captains, Beluche and Dominique-You, had their quarters.

The third, Catalon by name, and a native of Honduras, whose cabin was outside the enclosure, stood in front of this body of men, who seemed listening to what he was saying to Beluche and Dominique-You, as the two sat, smoking tranquilly, upon the platform before their house.

Catalon had been with those who rowed out to meet the English boat; and he was relating once more the details of the affair, while the men were — silently or otherwise — putting their own varying constructions upon the possible meaning of the objectionable intrusion.

Lafitte passed quickly to the other door of his house, and having ordered Nato, who was lounging upon the step, to go inside with Scipio, to whom he now gave some hasty, low-voiced instructions, he locked this door and placed the key in his pocket.

He then went to the end of the stockade, and not seeing Pierre amongst the men gathered there, asked if any one knew of the latter's whereabouts.

"He was outside, my captain, when last I saw him. He was sitting on the bluff, smoking, and swearing that the men should do no harm to that boat-load of beauties lying off shore," replied Dominique-You, his swarthy face wrinkling with a grin.

"And it will take more than Pierre to keep the powder cool, if this strain is to last much longer," said the aristocratic-looking Beluche. "Will you tell us, Captain Lafitte, why these English dogs are permitted to so long pollute our air?"

He spoke in the purest French, with a drawling accent, and waved a white hand, as if to waft away obnoxious odors.

Lafitte looked at him sternly, but without replying; and Catalon added, "Yes, my captain, tell us why they dare come here, and for what, and how is it that you could remain so long shut up with them?"

"Silence!" commanded Lafitte; and Catalon retreated hastily, as if from personal fear.

"Since when," the former continued, "have I been accustomed to account to you for my doings?"

He did not wait for an answer, but, turning to face them, he addressed all of the men:

"The exact meaning of the strangers being here is something which will be explained to you in time; and that I love them for the uniform they wear, you have no reason to believe of me, any more than of yourselves. But there are good reasons why I must be left to act as I choose, until I have consulted with your leaders. There is a decision to be made before explanations can be given you, — a decision that concerns all our interests, — yours and mine alike. You have never yet failed me in an emergency, nor have I you; so do not make the mistake of failing me now, by doubts of my keeping faith with you, and acting in your interest. My wish — my command — now is, that you men, with Catalon, leave the stockade, and remain outside where you belong, during the night, or until I summon you here. It is your supper hour; disperse, and put away those guns until you are told they are needed."

Some of the men growled dissent; but as the greater part of them, without replying, began to retire, the more belligerent went with them.

When they were gone, Lafitte turned to Dominique-You and Beluche.

"Pierre and I will take up quarters with you for the night, my captains, and while we are having supper, I will explain matters; and we four must decide upon the proper course to pursue in regard to a most surprising offer these strangers have been making."

The two men nodded, and Beluche, always more in Lafitte's confidence than were Dominique-You or Catalon, felt privileged to ask, "Did I not see you lock up the Englishmen as prisoners?"

"Yes, for their own safety and ours, as I am obliged to keep them here until to-morrow. And see you to it, Beluche, and you, Dominique, that none of the men approach that locked door, while I find Pierre, and go to send the English sailors back to their ship."

"Then they stop here all night—those two English dogs?" inquired Dominique-You, in an aggressively disapproving tone.

Lafitte looked at him angrily, but replied with quiet firmness, "They do, because I wish it; because I know what I am doing, as both of you will agree when I explain the matter to you."

Beluche waved his hand in a deprecatory fashion as he said, "You have no need to tell me that, Captain Lafitte;" and Dominique-You, as though wishing to appear no less loyal, hastened to say, with an air of apology, "Of course, my captain, I did not intend to question your right to do whatever you see fit."

"That is well," replied Lafitte. "Have patience to believe that I mean you fair. Meanwhile guard that door until I return; and then it will be better to fasten the gates for the night."

The shadows were falling fast, and the dampening air was melodious with the notes of the mocking-birds that filled the trees about the fort, while faint but sweet came other fluting voices from the deeper woods, mingling with

the occasional cry of an owl, or the reiterative note of a whippoorwill; and now and then the maniacal scream of a loon came from the sedges.

On the edge of the bluff was Pierre, a gun across his knees, and looking like a sentinel on guard, except that he was stretched upon the ground, smoking.

The other men had disappeared, and the wreathing smoke beginning to curl from the rude chimneys of their cabins told that they were making preparations for supper.

It was, even amid such wild surroundings, a peaceful scene; for the subdued hum of voices, the faint rattle of cooking utensils, and the murmur of the water washing in on the beach below, were all that disturbed the silence.

Pierre's head turned quickly at the sound of footsteps behind him, and he sprang upright as Jean said, "We must row out there, and send those fellows back to their ship. The officers will remain here for the night."

This was somewhat startling news; but Pierre's only response was, "Are we to go unarmed?" And he glanced at his gun.

"No, bring your gun; it is as well to have it," replied Jean, as he lit a small dark lantern he was carrying and started down the pathway toward the beach.

"Is it well that you go unarmed, Jean?"

The latter's answer was to turn his head and smile over his shoulder as he tapped his breast.

Nothing more was said until a small boat had been pushed off. Jean sat in the stern, and Pierre, laying his gun across the seat, picked up the oars and began to row with long, steady strokes that sent the light craft speeding out toward the English boat, showing black in the gathering dusk.

Jean now tied a handkerchief to an extra oar, and raised it, making a white flutter in the shadows.

"Offered they a generous bribe?" Pierre inquired softly, turning his head in order to make sure of the other boat's exact position, while his powerful arms worked with the smoothness of a piston-rod.

"Indeed, yes. But why did you so readily guess their errand?"

"Perhaps it was because I am not the fool I look," was the rejoinder, accompanied by a laugh.

"They offer me the rank of captain in the English navy, and thirty thousand dollars in cash."

Pierre gave a low whistle.

"And the price of all this honor and wealth?" he asked, taking another backward glance.

"Pull a bit more to larboard; we will stop at easy hailing distance," said Jean, after turning half-way in his seat. Then, in an entirely different tone, one of concentrated rage, "The price is that we are to sell ourselves to the English, and lead them, by our own paths and water-ways, so that they may fall unexpectedly upon New Orleans, and burn the city, after pillaging it. They are also to buy the slaves with promised freedom, and then add to the ruin by an insurrection."

Pierre, although of not so fine a mould as Jean, shared the latter's dislike to profanity, and rarely indulged in strong language. But he now uttered a terrible oath.

This was his only comment; and it was followed by silence, until Jean announced, "Here we are; and we'll lie on our oars."

He sent a challenging shout over the water. It was answered at once; then came the sound of working oars, and Lafitte called again, "Come no nearer. Captains Lockyer and McWilliams will remain on the island for the night, and have sent you written orders. Stop where you are, and I will bring them to you."

A short pause succeeded; then a surly "Aye, aye," came across the water, and the rowing stopped, just as a fiery thread of the rising moon was lifting above the sea.

Pierre soon brought his boat alongside the other one, and Jean, laying a hand on its gunwale, inquired, "Who is in command here?"

"I am, sir," replied one of the men, rising so that his

powerful form stood out above the others. "I'm bo's'n of the brig."

"Here are your orders," said Lafitte, handing the sealed paper to the nearest man, who passed it along. "You are to return to the brig, and report here at noon to-morrow."

"Aye, sir," replied the boatswain. "But," hesitatingly, "how am I to know —"

"Can you read?" interrupted Lafitte.

"Aye, somewhat, sir."

"Do you know Captain Lockyer's handwriting?"

"Aye, sir, if I should see it."

"Here," and Lafitte flashed the bright gleam of the lantern he had taken from between his feet. "Hold the paper so that the light will strike it. There — that will do. Can you make it out?"

"Aye, aye, sir; and it seems to look as it should."

"Very well," said Lafitte, closing the lantern. "Give it to your officer in charge, and tell him that the message was delivered to you by Captain Lafitte himself. Pull away, Pierre," he added in a lower tone.

A confused murmur of surprise came from the crew; and the boatswain, raising his voice as the other boat shot away, called, "Aye, aye, sir; it shall be as you have ordered. Is there nothing more, sir?"

"No; pull away," was the curt reply from the already dimming Baratarian boat.

Eight oars touched the water as one, and the English boat went her way.

Pierre soon began to row more slowly; and Jean asked, in continuation of their recent talk, "Heard you ever of a more dastardly plan for white men to map out?"

"Not I," growled Pierre. "Even Laro, scoundrel as he was, never did a worse thing. And if we decline this, Jean, then what is it to be, or did they not do us the honor of doubting our acceptance?"

"Barataria is to be overrun by the English; our ships and property confiscated; and you and I, together with

our men, put to death as pirates, who have merited the vengeance of Great Britain by our seizure of Spanish vessels."

"Aye," said Pierre; "but the Spanish ships were taken under our commission from Carthage, which is warring with Spain. What has England to do with that?"

"The same she presumes to do with everything running counter to her own ambitions and wishes, or when she desires a pretext for committing still greater outrages."

"So!" But Pierre's laugh had little of mirth in it. "Louisiana offers a price for your head, and England threatens to hang you if you will not help her destroy New Orleans, so that she may have Louisiana by the throat. A fine choice of favors, this, to select from."

It was now Jean who laughed as he said, "I forgot to tell you of a bit of news with which these visitors surprised me. Did you know that Pierre Lafitte was now confined in the New Orleans gaol awaiting trial for felony?"

"Well, scarcely," replied Pierre, with a chuckle, as he beached the boat, after which he sat motionless, staring up into Jean's laughing face, until the latter leaped to the sands.

"Neither did I, until they told me." And, while speaking, he gave his handkerchief a sharp shake before putting it away, as if to free the cambric from all association with their recent mission.

"And what said you to them in regard to this?" inquired Pierre, picking up his gun and stepping from the boat.

"Nothing, as it would not have been polite to question the assertion of those so well versed in the recent news of a city I have not seen for so long a time."

At this both men laughed as they started up the pathway.

"They sent you the proposal by word of mouth, Jean?" asked Pierre, when they had gone a few steps.

"No; in due form, upon paper. The two officers are

safely housed behind locked doors, with Scipio, for the night; you and I will stop with Beluche and Dominique. I have yet to tell them what you already know. We will have supper together, we four, and look over these English papers; then I will set forth my plans, which are well formulated in my mind."

Pierre reached out and caught the shoulder in front of him, and the two came to a sudden halt.

"Jean," he whispered, "you will never agree to this thing, nor advise any further negotiation with England?"

"*Mon Dieu!* Not I, my brother."

They paused on the crest of the bluff, and looked around them. The moon had lifted nearly all its disk, still a dull, rayless red, showing like a smouldering fire amid the dark vapors drifting raggedly across its face. All about was deserted; but the hum of voices told that the men were inside their cabins, at supper. The stockade rose, a black mass, save where its gates stood ajar; and several hounds came running out to meet the two Lafittes as they entered.

"You said the British officers were quartered in our house for the night?" said Pierre, when Jean had bolted the gates, and the two were taking their way across the enclosure.

"Yes, locked up snugly, with the keys of both doors in my pocket. And Scipio is locked in as well, to look after them and their comfort."

Again Pierre laughed unmirthfully.

"'T is better assurance for them and their comfort that the gates too are locked. Our men had all the tiger in them roused at sight of the red coats; and darkness whets the appetite of tigers, and makes them prowl around for prey. I know not why it is, Jean, but I have not the patience I once had for dealing with these brutes when their schooling from Laro tries to get the upper hand."

CHAPTER FORTY-TWO

UNDER the low, cane-thatched roof covering the abode of Beluche and Dominique-You, they and the two Lafittes ate supper in comparative silence, owing to the coming and going of the slave, Juniper, who waited upon them. But the meal over, with pipes and bottles upon the cleared table, and Juniper shut apart in his own domain, they proceeded to discuss the matter whose contemplation had made their silence seem sullen.

"We had better have Catalon before I explain an offer made to us by these Englishmen," said Lafitte, drawing a package from his pocket and beginning to open it. "Will you call him in, Dominique? And make sure that none of the men enter the stockade."

Dominique-You went out, accompanied by Pierre, who would watch by the unbarred gate until the former should return with Catalon.

When the door was closed after them, Beluche, lighting a cigar, muttered, "*Caramba!* As I thought; they would seek to buy us."

"Would you like to serve Great Britain?" Lafitte's mocking tone was repeated in the expression flashing from his eyes, raised a moment from the papers he was holding.

"Serve Great Britain!" Then, with another oath — and Beluche was, as a rule, too indolent for any very great amount of emphasis — "Aye, serve it as I like, and in a way it would scarcely relish."

Lafitte smiled. "Then you and I are of one mind, as I thought we would be. But wait a little, until you know what we are offered."

Beluche's face became alert with a new thought.

"Pardon, my captain," he said, pitching his voice in a lower key, "if I ask is a very large bribe offered; because, in case the idea may not have occurred to yourself, I would suggest that if the bribe be a great one, I would not care to trust Catalon, and perhaps not Dominique, with knowledge of the exact amount. It might prove too much for their integrity; for both of them are growing dissatisfied with our present inactivity and manner of living."

"I myself, Beluche, have suspected such a thing; but I appreciate and thank you for the precaution you show. You and Pierre are, however, the only ones I had reckoned upon trusting with the details of the bribe, which, after all, is made to me alone, and concerns no one else."

"Still, my captain, should Catalon know of this, it might tempt him to try for something similar, and perhaps at your expense. I am not quite sure that Dominique could be induced to sell us for his own gain; but I have little faith to give Catalon. He retains too much of the old captain's views and methods to be entirely one of your own sort."

"I will tell neither of them anything but what we will afterwards lay before all the men. Meantime I can rely upon you, Beluche?"

He spoke hurriedly, for they heard the voices of those for whom they were waiting.

"As yourself, my captain."

"Later on I should like to tell you all," Lafitte added quickly, as the door opened, and Pierre, with Dominique-You and Catalon, entered the room.

When they were all seated, Lafitte, in a low tone, and to the accompaniment of occasional angry comments and imprecations, principally from the last comers, read the two papers, omitting however all mention of the money offered to himself.

When he had finished, Dominique-You was the first to speak.

"Ah, my captain, if but you would invite them out,

those two English red-birds, and let us wing them as they fly."

"Is that hard head of yours addled with drink, Dominique," Beluche exclaimed testily, "that you talk with so little sense?"

"Such a thing, Dominique-You, might gratify your own private feelings, and show the honest sentiments of all the other men," said Lafitte, as he refolded the papers. "But I must ask that you remind yourself of the infamy it would attach to us should those coming here under a flag of truce be harmed, or treated with needless discourtesy."

"A thing it would be easier to remember if their jackets were of a different color," remarked Catalon, after which he poured a tumbler of spirits down his capacious throat and then banged the glass upon the table.

"Red coats or blue, they are our visitors, under the protection of a flag of truce," said Lafitte, looking sternly about him. "And you must shoot me, before you shall dare disgrace me and yourselves by harming them."

There was a short silence, while the speaker's flashing eyes rested upon Catalon's sulky face.

"Now tell us, Captain Lafitte," spoke up Beluche, who, like Pierre, had been smoking contemplatively, apparently revolving what had been read, "tell us what you advise as the course to be pursued. But, first of all, I declare that never will I take up arms for England, against America or any other nation. As to that, I can count upon enough followers to make it worth my while to sail away southward, and stop there until this trouble is over."

He glanced at his companions, as if inviting their comments, and, passing by the strong spirits, filled a small glass with choice Canary from the generous decanter near his elbow.

"And I am with you, Beluche," came in Dominique-You's heavy voice. "Of that I am as sure as that I would like to take a shot at those English birds, flag of truce or no."

He ended with an oath, as he took a deep draught from

the huge tumbler of brandy in his hand, and looked defiantly over the rim of his glass into the face of his commander. But he saw nothing there to indicate displeasure.

"And what say you, Catalon?" inquired Lafitte, turning to him as he sat staring into the fire, and chewing an end of the scarlet silk handkerchief knotted around his brown neck. "It is well that we learn how far England can count upon service from you, before I show the course I intend to pursue in this matter. I am assured, from what Beluche and Dominique have said, that they will be with me; that Pierre is, I know already. So let us hear if you would serve the English."

Catalon roused himself and looked up, his coarse-featured face full of wrath.

"Never, by——, Captain Lafitte! I say as say Beluche and Dominique. I may go away; but never will I fight with red-coats for messmates, — not I. If I caught one of my men thinking of such a thing, I would shoot him down as quickly as I would like to shoot those two of whom you are taking such precious care across the yard."

A slight smile was Lafitte's only comment upon this outburst. Then, laying a hand on the tipped-back chair in which his foster-brother sat beside him, he said, "And you, Pierre, have you any objections to make?"

Pierre did not move his head, but turned his eyes to the smiling face near him.

"Need you ask?"

Jean's hand rose from the chair to press its occupant's broad shoulder, as, looking at the other men and speaking decisively, he said, "It would seem that we are of one mind in disdaining to accept these propositions."

"Aye," growled Dominique-You.

"I will now," Lafitte continued, "tell you that my idea is to communicate promptly with the authorities in New Orleans, offering them, for the city's defence, our services, which the English appear to value so highly. The price I shall demand is the granting to us of pardon for all past

offences, or supposed offences. To such of my officers and men who may suffer materially, I will promise all the help my private purse can give. What say you to this?"

He glanced around the circle, his eyes resting finally on Catalon and Dominique-You.

"I say, my captain, that it is all very much to my taste," replied the latter; and Catalon added as emphatically, "Mine as well!"

"And you, Beluche; what say you?"

Beluche, who was sipping the last of his Canary, replied slowly, "I say, without reserve, that I am with you in everything that is for America as against England, and I know that my men will be with me."

"Aye," added Catalon, "we can all fight with a better stomach for Governor Claiborne than for King George."

"And what if Governor Claiborne refuse us the opportunity of fighting for him?"

The question was from Pierre, who had left his chair and was knocking the ashes from his pipe into the fireplace.

"He cannot afford to refuse us," declared Beluche, with unusual animation, before Jean could speak. And "Not he!" exclaimed Catalon and Dominique-You, speaking as with a single voice.

"This, then, is our course," said Lafitte, as if Pierre's question had been fitly answered, "and which, for the present, must be kept strictly to ourselves, as our men need not be told for several days to come. Meanwhile, in the morning, I will answer Lockyer and McWilliams as I find it best to do. And, Catalon, remember, you and Dominique, see to it that the men are kept quiet, and that nothing occurs to prevent my returning the two officers safely to their boat."

Dominique-You was silent, while Catalon muttered angrily.

Lafitte, lighting a cigar, said nothing; but Beluche's drawling tone checked the disgruntled one.

"Friend Catalon, be not such a blind fool as to risk cut-

ting your own throat in such an important crisis. For should you be the instigator of any unpleasantness for our visitors, we would be forced to explain matters, and perhaps, in the end, accede to an English demand for the honor of giving you an English funeral."

Catalon did not reply, but, after another surly silence, filled his glass and emptied it slowly.

Several times during the night Jean and Pierre, singly or together, went outside to reconnoitre: but the hours passed without disturbance.

Once, while Jean was pacing up and down beneath the bright stars with the hounds for company, the sound of a far-off wolf's cry changed, as would have the blast of a trumpet, the current of his thoughts.

Was it really coming, and so near as it seemed, — the day for which he had longed, holding for him the chance of redeeming himself in the estimation of the Island Rose? And were not events seeming to shape for enabling him to fulfil the promise made upon Elba, — that he would erase the stigma from the name of Lafitte in Louisiana?

A thrill of hope made new life spring within him; and, with an unvoiced prayer, he lifted his wilful face to the heavens, from whence there seemed to descend a strange peace.

CHAPTER FORTY-THREE

AT sunrise a change had taken place in the appearance of things about the stockade. Before the now opened gates a brawny Irishman, one of Beluche's trusted followers, fully armed, paced to and fro; and Lopez stood guard before the locked doors of Lafitte's house. It had been decided that Catalon's mood was too uncertain for entire reliance to be placed in him or his men; and, should these attempt to mete out vengeance after their own taste, there was a suspicion upon the part of the Lafittes and Beluche that Dominique-You and his followers might catch the fierce contagion.

Some of those outside the stockade would come up occasionally, alone, or in groups, to exchange words with Miles Ford, the Irish sentry, or stand staring inside, where, near the gates, a number of the more trustworthy men were preparing their breakfasts.

These men had been selected by the Lafittes and Beluche, and stationed inside to be there in case of trouble at midday, when the English officers would leave the fort.

As Pierre, Jean, and the two under-captains were finishing breakfast, a messenger came to tell the former that the "Star of the Gulf" had come to anchor in the harbor, and was flying a signal for his presence on board.

"It is Zendanner, from Mexico, at last," he said, glancing at Jean; "and I am glad to know of his safe arrival. He should have been in a week ago."

"Why sends he not a boat here?" mumbled Dominique-You, his mouth filled with venison from the haunch before

him, which he was lessening rapidly by the huge slices transferred to his plate.

Beluche said nothing, but devoted his attention to a game pie of his own making.

"Will you go, or shall I?" Pierre asked, as Jean remained silent.

The latter, like Pierre, knowing the full meaning of the signal, replied that he would go aboard; and, leaving Pierre in charge of matters at the stockade, he took his way to the harbor.

Returning in an hour's time, he was coming up the path from the beach when he heard unmistakable sounds of tumult, followed by the roar of the gun mounted upon a pivot in front of his own house, as a protection against possible disturbances.

More angry than startled, he raced across the intervening space to the stockade, which he had no sooner reached than, with cries of "Here is the captain!" a few of the outlaws, crowding into the open gateway, and expostulating with their fellows inside, disappeared.

Pierre, Beluche, and Dominique-You were standing upon the steps of the house, shouting angrily at the rioters—for such they were, who, armed, and filled with murderous lust, crowded before them, demanding "The two English spies!"

Lopez, at Pierre's command, had just fired the swivel gun, taking care to aim it upward, with the hope of routing the mutineers by fear, rather than by bloodshed.

"Scatter, scatter—get you gone!" he was now yelling, while making ready to fire a second charge. "Get you gone, while you may, else this dose shall eat some of you!" And, lighting the match, he stood ready to apply it.

Some of the more timid men fell to the ground, to escape the expected charge of shot and slugs; but a crowd of the bolder ones, their eyes gleaming with fury, made a sudden rush upon Lopez. One snatched the match from

his hand, some of them pinioned his arms, and others turned the gun, pointing it directly toward the locked door.

Then a cheer, sounding like the howl of wild beasts, burst from the infuriated mob.

"If they'll not come out, then we can kill them through the door!" some one shouted, when there came the rush of a tall, sinewy form, whose impetus knocked the rioters right and left.

There was a flash of glittering steel, as Lafitte struck the hand of the man applying the match, and a spout of blood extinguished the flame as the match fell to the ground.

"Take that, for a warning, you mutinous scoundrels, who seek to murder unarmed men!" shouted a voice trembling with rage such as was rarely manifested. "Disperse, you cowards, before I can count five, or you shall be ridded of legs as well as hands."

He had, while speaking, whirled the gun to its former position, and lit another match; and now, motioning Lopez to his place, he stood looking at the mutineers, who, silent and cowering, seemed unable to face his flashing eyes, above which the uncovered hair waved as if moved by an inward wrath.

The would-be murderers slunk away, and in ten minutes all was quiet as though nothing untoward had happened.

After sending Pierre, who was something of a surgeon, to attend the man he had wounded, Lafitte demanded from his sub-captains an explanation of the mutiny.

Dominique-You stood, silent and sullen, leaving Beluche to tell the story.

This was to the effect that there had been an unexpected rush from outside; that the men in the stockade had, at the outset, tried the power of persuasion, accompanied by that of their fists, but were preparing, as bidden by both Pierre and Beluche, to fire upon their comrades, when Lafitte appeared and put an end to the *émeute*.

Lafitte received the explanation in cold silence, but with

a look which warned Dominique-You as to what measures would be taken in the event of another outbreak; for a few of the latter's followers had been amongst the other mutineers, who were mostly Catalon's men.

Catalon himself had not been upon the scene, but remained in his cabin, drinking and smoking, with no apparent concern in regard to what was transpiring so near him.

"I suspect that we have Catalon's talk to thank for all this," remarked Beluche to Lafitte, when Dominique-You, still doggedly silent, had gone to his quarters and left the others alone.

Lafitte nodded, and, after dismissing Beluche, with orders to keep a sharp look-out, and summon him instantly, should those outside show themselves at the gate, unlocked the door of his house, and soon stood in the presence of his wondering visitors.

CHAPTER FORTY-FOUR

THE officers, needless to say, had heard the commotion outside, and were greatly puzzled to account for it. Scipio happening to come into the room, they questioned him; but the old negro, pretending to be deafer than was really the case, stared at them blankly, and shook his head, and the Englishmen, seeing that it was useless to seek any information in that quarter, turned their backs upon him in dignified scorn, while they conversed in low tones.

Out in his kitchen, the old negro, after bidding Nato keep away from the fastened door, went unconcernedly about his work, listening to the uproar outside, and grumbling to himself in French, because of being obliged to serve these red-coated gentry.

"What yer done reckon 's de matter, Scipio?" the younger darkey asked. He was greatly scared, and his eyes were rolling wildly. "Is dey gwine ter bust down der do'? Whar 's de captain all dis time?"

"I cayen' say, seh," growled Scipio, in his mincing Creole English. "I cayn' say vat dey matter, nor vat dey do; but eet is dey capitaine's ordaire zat we stay here weed dey so-damn Ainglais until he come. So here we stay teal dey door fall, or dey capitaine come to tell us go out dey maison. An' I tell yo' come here an' wipe dey deesh as I wash 'em."

The noise grew louder, until the cannon's discharge shook the floor under the Englishmen's feet, bringing to their minds the possibility of their crew having attempted to join them. And, if this were so, they feared their men were being treated roughly — perhaps butchered.

"This is surely a nest of hell!" declared Captain Lockyer, who was pacing the floor excitedly, fuming at being shut up in such a trap.

"I agree with you," assented McWilliams, who appeared to be taking matters more calmly. "And the faces that scowled around us when we landed suggested strong possibilities of their owners being worthy followers of Beelzebub."

They now heard the angry shouting of a single voice; and then silence seemed to fall over those outside.

"It is probably a row amongst themselves," McWilliams continued; and Captain Lockyer, stepping nearer to the door, bent his head to listen. But he could hear nothing through the thick oak.

When Lafitte entered, both officers were seated, facing the door. But they rose and stood for a moment, while their faces assumed a common look of austerity. Then, resuming their seats, they waited for him to speak.

He was breathing rapidly, as if from excitement; his face was pale, and his eyes still held the fire of recent anger.

He bowed, and, without seating himself, said with his usual calm courtesy of manner, "I regret most sincerely, gentlemen, to have subjected you to a confinement which must have proved scarcely pleasant, to say nothing of the disturbance outside, the noise of which you doubtless heard. Some of my men made an attempt to molest you; but, happily for myself, as well as for you, I have made them abandon the idea. You will now, I trust, acknowledge the propriety of my having restricted your liberty while you were on the island."

He paused, as if expecting a reply from them. But they only bowed; and resuming the air and tone he had assumed during their former interview, he continued, "I have to tell you, gentlemen, of my decision not to answer hastily the very flattering proposal you have brought me; a decision made necessary because of the numerous elements which enter into the matter, and which require most careful consideration."

"But —" Captain Lockyer began, when Lafitte interrupted him.

"Pardon me, sir, I have not finished."

The Englishman's face reddened, but he remained silent; and there was a moment's pause, until Lafitte continued speaking, now more rapidly.

"It is not necessary, neither is it proper, that I give any reasons for my present decision. But, if you still require a final and definite answer from me, it will be given you on the eighteenth day of this month, at noon, upon an island called 'The Turtle,' lying off the mouth of the East Pass. I have selected this place because — and you will doubtless agree with me — I fear it will not be well for either of you to come again upon Grande Terre."

Both officers began to remonstrate and expostulate at the length of time Lafitte had named; but he checked them by saying firmly, "Knowing best what I have to do, gentlemen, I venture to assume that I am the proper judge of the time needful to decide such an important matter."

This the Englishmen were compelled, although with very bad grace, to accept as a finality.

They were, not long afterwards, taken to the beach, escorted by Lafitte and a body of his trusted men, while the unruly ones hung about with lowering looks and threatening eyes, but offered no further violence.

Beluche and a crew of picturesque-looking outlaws rowed the officers out to meet their own boat; and Lafitte watched them from the shore until they were well away from the island.

Upon returning to the top of the bluff he found Pierre sitting in the shadows of the trees, scanning through a spyglass the waters of the gulf, over to the east; and scattered about in groups, talking amongst themselves, the men were watching the boat that was to carry their hoped-for prey to safety. For the English boat could now be seen coming to meet Beluche, while, pearled by the shim-

mering distance, the "Sophia" lay where she had been the day before; but now another ship was near her.

"Spies! Death to the English!" muttered some of the outlaws to each other. "The bay is filling with them."

"Can the English fleet be gathering out there?" Pierre asked, not removing the glass from his eye, as Jean sat down beside him.

"Let me look a moment," the latter said, not answering the question.

"If they are," continued Pierre, as he handed him the glass, and glancing about, to make sure that none of their followers could overhear his words, "may they not try to use force, in order to bring a more speedy answer from you?"

"Even so; we know how to fight."

There was silence, while the speaker's eyes took a sweeping, comprehending look at the ships and surrounding waters. Then he said, speaking in a lower tone, "We must, for the present, guard night and day against surprise; and that will be all to occupy the men until I can hear from the governor in regard to the proposition we will lay before him."

"Who will take it to New Orleans?" inquired Pierre, adding quickly, as he saw his foster-brother hesitate, "Surely not yourself, Jean; never think you of such a thing. Do not risk trusting Claiborne so far; but let me take the message."

"You! No — a thousand times no! To repeat your own words, I would not trust Claiborne so far. No, we will send Beluche; and Lopez shall go with him. There is no reward for either of these two, and no proclamation against them, save as they are known to be my followers. Beluche and Lopez shall go to Claiborne; and I will send Nato with them, to find the Señorita Lazalie, for I must know how she has been faring. Should the English get into New Orleans it will be a poor place for her; and it would be better that she stop indefinitely at Bayou Bienvenue, with La Roche."

"Would it not be well to give General La Roche some hint of our proposal?"

"That I intend to do. Nato can be trusted to take a message to him."

"I think the boy would be flayed alive for your interests — sooner than betray them," Pierre remarked, as he raised the spyglass, and met the eyes of Beluche looking up at him; for the Baratarian boat, now freed of its unwelcome passengers, was nearing the shore below.

"Yes, he can be trusted," Jean assented; "and, owing to his size and appearance, he will be less likely to meet with interference."

When Lafitte, a little later in the day, having called his men together, gave orders for a strict surveillance to be maintained, and told them that they were to fire upon any English boat or man approaching Grande Terre, a wild cheer broke from them. Their good humor was entirely restored; the prospect of fighting rendered them hilarious; and the remainder of the day was spent in stocking the fort, in view of a possible siege, in burnishing arms, and getting in readiness for any action by the British fleet which might be hovering about, ready to join the two vessels now in sight.

Beluche and Lopez, with a small crew, departed that same night upon their mission to New Orleans, taking with them Nato, who was to be landed in the woods, about two hours' fast walk from La Tête des Eaux, General La Roche's plantation on Bayou Bienvenue.

Lafitte had, at the last moment, decided to change the nature of his message to La Roche, and tell him nothing of the English proposition. But, after asking him to persuade the Señorita Lazalie to remain at La Tête des Eaux until matters in the city should become more settled, he added, for La Roche's warning, that the "Sophia" and another English war vessel had for two days and a night past been lying a short distance off Grande Terre; and that he had strong reasons for suspecting others of the fleet to

be in the neighborhood, awaiting reinforcements, in order to attack Mobile.

He requested that this be repeated to Count de Cazeneuve, who he understood was now La Roche's guest, and added that the "Star of the Gulf," with her Mexican cargo, was in the harbor.

The latter information was sufficient hint for both the count and La Roche, each of whom had a large interest in Lafitte's Mexican silver mines.

Upon the day following Beluche's departure, the Baratarians were surprised, and puzzled, to see the "Sophia" and her consort sail away to the eastward; and their departure caused Lafitte to decide upon a visit to Bayou Bienvenue, as soon as he should hear from Governor Claiborne.

Nato returned several days later, and brought a message from General La Roche, urging Lafitte to come at once. But he waited until the seventh day after Beluche's departure, passing meanwhile from wonder to impatience at the latter's delay, and at having received no message from his emissaries in New Orleans.

Sufficient time had passed for assurance that he had no need to suspect a ruse upon the part of the two English vessels, although he and Pierre, together with some of their men, had, at one time, been inclined to think the former were attempting to throw the Baratarians off their guard, and then, by a speedy return, surprise a poorly prepared defence. But he now concluded that the British were really so desirous of obtaining the Baratarians for allies that they would do nothing to awaken their animosity.

Among other reasons for going to La Roche's plantation, Lafitte wished to deliver in person the shares due the former and Count de Cazeneuve from the Mexican mines; and he was inclined to think that the general, from the fact of sending such an urgent invitation by Nato, had some important information to impart.

It was Nato who told Lafitte that Count de Cazeneuve had removed to Kanauhana, a small plantation adjoining

La Tête des Eaux. The boy said that the count had purchased it, and was removing all his slaves and other property from New Orleans.

Lafitte was, for reasons of his own, surprised at this piece of information, and now summoned Baptistine, the captain of the polacca upon which Nato had returned.

He — Baptistine — had set out for New Orleans upon the morning of the "Black Petrel's" arrival. It was, therefore, some time since he had seen Lafitte; and now, as he entered the room where the former sat awaiting him, he exclaimed with unfeigned pleasure, "A thousand times welcome back, my captain!"

He was a trim, graceful little man, with long black eyes that sparkled with good humor, and teeth whose whiteness contrasted sharply with the smooth brown of his face. He had always been a favorite with Lafitte, who had reason to know of the marvellous strength lying in the small, wiry body, and how much resource was concealed by the often inconsequent manner.

He responded cordially to Baptistine's enthusiastic greeting, and, after bidding him to be seated, pushed a box of cigars nearer to his elbow.

Having done this, he filled a glass of liquor for him, showing a courtesy that emphasized friendly regard, and then asked for news from the city.

Much of what Baptistine had to tell was already known to Lafitte; but the former added to this by saying that the ferment among the citizens of New Orleans appeared to be growing more violent each day. There was talk that when General Jackson arrived he would find but scanty support; and the little man ended with: "If, my captain, the fools begin to fight among themselves, what will hinder the English from stealing in upon them, while they are busy calling one another names?"

He spoke in French; and Lafitte replied in the same tongue, "Truly they are fools, to quarrel among themselves at such a time as this. Of course," he added, drop-

ping generalities, "you saw our men before you left the city."

"I did, my captain. They arrived the second day before I left, and told me I was to pick up Nato off the Owl's Point. Captain Beluche went ashore with Lopez as soon as 'The Lady Inez' dropped anchor; and neither of them had been heard from when I left."

"Did the men tell you why Beluche went to New Orleans?"

Baptistine's round face grew still rounder with surprise.

"Nothing, my captain — not a word. Indeed, they told me that they themselves were wondering what the errand might be. But surely you must know why Captain Beluche went."

Baptistine's voice was tinged with indignation; for his suspicions, like those of his fellows, were easily aroused. But he looked relieved when Lafitte said with a smile, "Oh, yes, I know accurately as to his errand; and so shall you, in a few days. You have heard" — his smile now showing the hint of a sneer — "of our recent visitors?"

"Yes, my captain, both from our men aboard 'The Lady Inez' and also from the men here, after I arrived."

"That is well; but do not encourage the men to talk of the matter — at least for the present."

"That surely I will not do, my captain, if you so bid me."

"Well, I so bid you, as a favor to me. Now let me hear — if you know — of what Nato has been trying to tell me. It seems that Shapira has sold his place to C^ount de Cazeneuve."

"Shapira has not sold — only rented it, to M^{rs}ieur le Comte, for the winter, as the count is far from well, and does not wish to return to the city until matters there promise less of excitement."

"And his granddaughter is with him?" inquired Lafitte, in a tone giving Baptistine no hint of how the questioner's pulses were thrilling.

"Yes, my captain; she, and all his household—every one. He has brought all his slaves from New Orleans, and come to live at Kanauhana. It was Shapira himself who told me this when I saw him at the Owl's Point. He said he was tired of playing planter, and would sooner be back here at Barataria."

"Aye; I always thought he was too good a sailor to be long happy as a peaceful landowner," said Lafitte, tossing his cigar into the fireplace.

"Yet who so happy as Shapira, two years since, when he found that his dead uncle had left Kanauhana to him?"

The little man spoke meditatively, and in a way to indicate considerable envy of his former comrade's good fortune.

"Even so," assented Lafitte. "But the Jew is too good a sailor, and too young, to be contented with the uneventful life of a planter. Where is he stopping now, and what doing?"

"He told me that he intends offering his services to General Jackson; and, being so fine a shot, he can surely render a good account of himself."

Lafitte nodded, and again asked, "But where is he living, now that Count de Cazeneuve occupies his place?"

"I asked him that question, my captain; but he laid a finger along that hooked nose of his, and winked at me as he said that if ever I sought him, he would not be found intruding upon the hospitality of M'sieur le Comte. Of course the men had to hear us talk, with me on the boat, and Shapira standing upon the Owl's Point; so I take it that he intended me to understand he was living below, in the Raven's Cave. You know, my captain—"

"Never mind speaking of the Colonneh," Lafitte broke in, with a warning gesture. "Be careful," he continued in a low voice, "how that place is mentioned; we may, before long, have need of it for important purposes."

Baptistine said nothing, but nodded wisely.

The so-called Colonneh, meaning Raven, was the Chero-

kee name for a hiding-place known to but few of Lafitte's men; and Cherokee also was the name — Kanauhana — of the plantation, taken from the hominy produced there, "Ka-nau-ha-na" being the Indian term for the crushed corn, cooked to the consistency of paste.

The night it was of the seventh day after Beluche's departure that Lafitte left Grande Terre for General La Roche's plantation, with sundry bags of silver hidden in the cabin of the polacca that was to convey him up the narrow water-way to Lake Borgne, whence his course lay westerly, up Bayou Bienvenue, an obscure stream, at whose head was the plantation.

Lafitte and his crew knew the blind, devious way as does the landsman the smooth, often-trod path leading homeward; and the Baratarians feared it, either in daylight or darkness, as little as did their land brother the pebbles that might lie along his road.

The shores were thickly timbered, and grew into a jungle of forest, where the night came quickly, and densely dark, under the overhanging boughs that interlaced overhead, often shutting away the sky.

Now and again a panther's scream, or the whining cry of a wild-cat, made the darkness seem still more dismal; and the booming note of the alligator was heard along the sluggish water.

But little cared Lafitte as to the nature of his surroundings; for, from out the darkness, he seemed to see the pure face and violet eyes he was about to look upon after all these eventful months.

CHAPTER FORTY-FIVE

THE twelve months elapsing since the September afternoon that witnessed Rose de Cazeneuve's disillusion in regard to her trusted "Captain Jean" had been uneventful ones for her, until very recently, when she had met Lazalie under General La Roche's hospitable roof, and, for the first time in her life, found a girl friend.

The dark beauty and indifferent manner of the Spanish girl possessed a strange and powerful attraction for the gentle-natured Rose; and Lazalie, feeling the other's admiration and liking, had reciprocated in a way that brought to the surface her better and more womanly self.

The past three years, during which she had, through General La Roche and his widowed sister, mingled in the most select society of New Orleans, had refined and polished the untamed girl of seventeen who came from the "Barra de Hierro," knowing little restraint beyond that of her own imperious will, and revelling in a freedom fostered by the worship of her indulgent uncle's lawless followers.

As to Laro himself, she had acquired but a faint idea of his real life and calling, — little more than she knew upon the day he had taken her and Brigida from the Spanish convent, where she had been placed by her father, at the death of his beautiful Irish wife; and both parents had died before Lazalie was ten years of age.

It might therefore be said of her, as of Jean Lafitte, that, owing to Laro's life and acts, she had been made to appear other than her true self.

General La Roche, understanding something of this, and helped to a fuller knowledge by what Lafitte had imparted

to him of the girl's history, exerted himself, aided by his sister, — who was wealthy, and of social prominence, — to have Lazalie's surroundings such as should eradicate the effects of a lawless past from a nature he believed to be truly refined and lovable.

The result had been that his protégée responded fully to his expectations; and the general was — as Pierre had told Jean — reported to have fallen in love with her.

But, as is often the case, Dame Rumor knew more than did some of those directly concerned; for the general's sister and Lazalie herself were ignorant as to his sentiment, which was of the sort possible only to men of his age and uprightness of life — half-fatherly in protective tenderness, and yet possessing all the ardor of a younger man's passion. And, taking it for granted that she could not return his affection, he had concealed the truth, lest the pleasant relations between them might be imperilled.

He had noted with satisfaction the growing intimacy between his ward and the dainty little granddaughter of De Cazeau; and when, after a few weeks' sojourn as his guest, the count had rented the adjoining plantation, and removed to Kanauhana, La Roche, with whom the Island Rose had always been a prime favorite, persuaded the grandfather to let her remain a while longer at La Tête des Eaux.

The general had also for a guest at this time the son of an old friend, Colonel Thomas Stewart, of Kentucky, who, sending young Harold to New Orleans upon a matter of business, had asked for him La Roche's hospitality.

The young man, just out of college, was filled with enthusiasm over this, his first visit to New Orleans, where, in former years, his father had been a frequent sojourner.

The slaves were the only ones astir at La Tête des Eaux when Lafitte, after landing at the Owl's Point, and with two sailors carrying the silver belonging to La Roche and De Cazeau, took the way toward the plantation, passing through woods where scarcely a ray of sunlight filtered between the pines and moss-hung oaks.

Baptistine was in command of the polacca, which was to lie off the Owl's Point, awaiting Lafitte's return. He had, however, been ordered to leave the crew in charge for a few hours, while he ascertained if Shapira was really at the Colonneh, and who, if anyone, might be keeping him company in the cave.

La Roche and the two girls were breakfasting when Lafitte arrived. Brigida, who was superintending certain domestic matters in a front room of the house, was the first to see his approach; and putting down a valuable vase from which she was wiping invisible dust, rushed from the room and descended the stairs so quickly that Chloe, the diminutive maid who was assisting her, stood gaping in amazement, until, peeping through the window, she grinned with pleasure at the sound of Lafitte's voice responding to Ma'am Brigida's effusive greeting.

The warm-hearted Irishwoman ushered him directly into the breakfast room, with — "Sure, here comes a stranger ye'll not be sorry to see."

The remark was intended for the benefit of her young mistress, who, notwithstanding the glow of surprise that deepened her rich color, and made momentary confusion show in her face, assumed the quiet control of manner taught by the world in which she now moved.

General La Roche, with the impetuosity of a much younger man, sprang from his chair and crossed the room to grasp Lafitte's hand, welcoming him in words which were but carelessly heard; for the new-comer glanced from Lazalie, who had followed her host's movements, to the childish figure still seated at the table, — to the lovely face, flushing and paling by turns, while the violet eyes, with a startled and yet not altogether displeased light showing in them, were raised to meet his own.

She rose slowly, and stood as if hesitating. But Lafitte, after bending low over Lazalie's hand, came straight toward the younger girl, an expression, half-appealing,

half-defiant, in his face, which she alone could observe, as his back was toward the others.

She appeared to have acquired new dignity and womanliness as she stood looking up at him; and, recalling as he did her shrinking aversion of him at their last meeting, he did not dare address her in other than a formal fashion.

So, not offering to touch her hand, he said, with a bow, "I hope, mademoiselle, that I find you quite well."

She answered in a low voice, her manner, with the color still going and coming in her cheeks, suggesting nothing more than unusual shyness.

Turning from her, and while Albert, the butler, showing as much pleasure as he thought it dignified to manifest, was, by his master's order, preparing another place at the table, Lafitte told General La Roche of the sailors who were waiting outside with their burdens; and the general, preceded by Lafitte, started to leave the room as a cheery whistling, accompanied by the sound of footsteps upon the oaken stairs, announced that Harold Stewart was coming down for breakfast.

Lafitte was already in the hall, and La Roche, pausing a moment, turned back to say, in a carefully lowered tone, "Señorita Lazalie — Mademoiselle Rose, I must warn both of you to have a care how you mention the name of Lafitte in the hearing of young Stewart. Remember," he added with unmistakable emphasis, "he must be 'Captain Jean,' and no one else, so long as he is here with us."

Lazalie nodded, with a smile of appreciation; but Mademoiselle de Cazeneuve looked with troubled eyes at the general as he hurried out.

She was greatly puzzled, as indeed she had been more than once during the past year, to understand how it was that people for whom she could have nothing but respect should seem to find no objection to fraternizing with the dreadful Lafitte; and she was beginning to wonder how much of untruth there might be in the terrible stories she had heard concerning him.

Yet—as she argued to herself—he must have done something very dreadful, else the governor would not have offered a reward for his capture.

She shuddered at thought of his being taken prisoner, to be treated as a criminal, and her quick wit told her the reason of her kind-hearted host's anxiety. For misfortune would surely come to his household should the governor know that one who had been proscribed as an outlaw was received as a guest at the La Roche plantation.

She recalled, too, how Lafitte had warned her of danger to her grandfather should she ever hint of the latter's association with himself.

It was all a perplexing puzzle; and the girl sighed as she stirred her chocolate.

Lazalie, hearing the sigh, laughed as her white teeth bit into her toast.

“Why do you sigh so woefully, my little Rose, and look so tragic? These gentlemen have their secrets to preserve, especially just now, when one cannot be sure that his neighbor will not betray him for a chance to curry favor with the governor, or is not scheming for opening the way to the English.”

“But none of us here would betray any one to the governor, and Harold Stewart is not English,” declared Mademoiselle de Cazeneuve, just as that young man entered the room.

“That I am not, Miss Rose,” he assented laughingly. “Who dared assert to the contrary? Was it you, Señorita Lazalie?”

“Is not your father English?” she asked, with a mocking smile, as he seated himself at her side.

“Not he. He, like myself, was born in Kentucky. My grandfather, to be sure, came from England to Virginia. But in what have I offended, that you should bring that misfortune up against me?”

Lazalie laughed, but deigned no reply; and, with a swift

change in the expression of his honest blue eyes, the young man looked at the troubled face opposite him.

"I think, Miss Rose, from what I heard as I came in, that you were defending me against something. Please accept your humble servitor's grateful thanks."

Her reply, whatever it might have been, was checked by the entrance of General La Roche and Lafitte; and young Stewart stared surprisedly at the tall, straight form following his host.

"Mr. Stewart," said the general, "I wish to present you to my friend Captain Jean, who has come to see me upon a matter of business. Mr. Stewart" — now speaking to Lafitte, as the young man rose and took the former's extended hand — "is the son of an old friend, whom I think you have met in past years. He was then Ensign Tommy Stewart, but now he is, if you please, Colonel Thomas Stewart, of Kentucky, a member of General Jackson's staff."

"I remember having met him in New Orleans, some years ago; and I am pleased to make the acquaintance of his son."

Lafitte's mellow, yet incisive voice; his erect carriage and courtly bearing, the very clasp of his long, sensitive fingers, — all these made their impression upon young Stewart, who set himself to wondering as to the identity of this fascinating stranger, whose handsome face, with its classical features, was distinctly un-American.

Meanwhile, as the breakfast proceeded, accompanied by a general and inconsequent chatter, Lafitte's keen eyes took note of the way in which the young man looked at Mademoiselle de Cazeneuve; and it seemed to him that not only was she conscious of Stewart's attention, but that it embarrassed her.

A fury, sudden and savage, possessed him at the thought of this handsome young stranger daring to covet what was to him, who had known her so long, the most precious thing in all his world. But the next moment, moved by a

cold, sullen sense of justice, he asked himself if this boy, with a past which was doubtless unsullied, and with his manhood yet unlived, were not a more fitting claimant for her, — one more likely to gain a return of love than he himself, so much older in years, to say nothing of his lawless past and uncertain future.

CHAPTER FORTY-SIX

“**B**Y Jove!” exclaimed Harold Stewart. “By Jove, Señorita Lazalie, what a fascinating fellow this Captain Jean is!”

The two were sitting in a shaded summer-house, Made-moiselle de Cazeneuve having disappeared immediately after breakfast, making — as Brigida told Lazalie — the excuse of wishing to see her grandfather, at Kanauhana.

Lazalie did not answer the young Kentuckian, but held a spray of honeysuckle before her eyes, that, alight with mocking amusement, were bent upon his earnest face as he continued, “What a magnificent figure he has! And he carries himself like a prince.”

“Ah — are you acquainted with many princes?”

“And what a rich coloring he has!” the young man went on, heedless of the jesting question. “What fine teeth, and splendid eyes!”

Lazalie laughed merrily.

“You seem fairly enamoured of Captain Jean.”

“Surely you cannot deny that he is very handsome.”

“I might, if it suited me to do so. But I am too lazy to quarrel about his looks, or even to discuss them,” she replied with marked indifference, stroking her cheek with the fragrant spray.

“Of what country is he a native?”

“Why do you ask me such questions?” Lazalie demanded, a slight petulance now showing in her voice. “Why not go to him, if you are so curious?”

Stewart laughed rather oddly. “It is queer, because he seems so genial and courteous, but do you know, I cannot imagine myself asking him any question of a personal nature.”

"Ah," she said, with a trace of earnestness, "you are impressionable, and have felt the 'Lafitte hauteur,' as it is called."

"The — what?" he asked, looking puzzled, and wondering at the start she gave and the troubled look upon her face, as her hands and the honeysuckle dropped into her lap.

"The 'Lafitte hauteur,'" young Stewart repeated; "Lafitte! Why, that is the name of the famous pirate of whom I have heard so many tales."

"Yes," Lazalie assented, quick to see a possible way out of her dilemma. "And they say that he is repellently haughty in his manner."

"Oh, I see," said Stewart, smiling at his own acumen. "The 'Lafitte hauteur' is your synonym for that trait; and that is why you apply it to this self-contained Captain Jean."

Lazalie nodded smilingly, while the young man wondered anew at her momentary annoyance, and again at her evident relief.

"Have you known him long?" he inquired, not appearing to be greatly affected by her former rebuff.

"Yes, for several years," she answered carelessly, adding, as though feeling little interest in Captain Jean, "I wonder why Rose slipped away alone. She always likes to have me go with her."

If Lazalie could have seen her little friend, her wonder would have been increased.

Up in the room assigned to her at Kanauhana, and made invitingly cosy for their beloved young mistress by Barbê and Zeney, — the latter, by the way, never failing to show her jealousy of the French woman's closer relations with Mademoiselle Rose — was that young lady, lying, a tumbled mass of pale blue draperies, upon a large, old-fashioned divan. Her head and face were buried in the pillows, and she was sobbing convulsively.

There was a considerable showing of dainty ankles, as

her small slippered feet hung limply over the side of the couch; and near it her broad-brimmed hat lay on the floor, as if tossed there by an impatient hand.

It was thus that Zeney found her; and the old negress, pausing on the door-sill, exclaimed shrilly, "La-la-la! What is this? Precious bird, tell Zeney who it is that has brought tears to the light of her eyes."

She spoke in the French patois of her fellows, but with a better accent and choice of words.

The sobs ceased; but the face buried itself still deeper in the pillows, and a little hand waved her off impatiently.

"Tell old Zeney, honey," the negress urged, as she crept to the divan and crouched on the floor beside it. "Tell your old Zeney what wicked tongue has spoken words to make her little ma'am'selle weep."

She had now taken the small white hand, and was caressing it tenderly.

"No one has made me weep," declared a voice half-strangled by tears. "It is only — it's only — oh, I cannot tell what it is; only I am miserable!"

The hand was snatched away, and its owner sat up, revealing to Zeney's troubled eyes a dishevelled fleece of sunny hair, a flushed face, and reddened eyelids.

"It is that proud Spanish missy!" exclaimed Zeney, with sudden anger. "I don't like her. She has made you cry. Come home, my honey; don't you stay where she is."

"Lazalie has nothing to do with it," was the reply, uttered with a spirit and emphasis that appeared to restore the speaker's composure. "She knows nothing of it, I tell you. It is," with manifest indecision — "only that I felt unhappy and I cannot tell myself why. But" — as if determined to find a reason — "I wish that Captain Lafitte had not come to see General La Roche this morning."

"La-la," said Zeney, a new light creeping into her shrivelled face, while she nodded her turbaned head until her long ear-rings clicked against the string of gold beads

tightly encircling her skinny neck. "Then good Captain Jean is still alive, and well! I am glad — so glad."

"Why should you be glad? What makes every one love him so?" demanded her mistress petulantly, as she wiped her face and eyes with the morsel of cambric and lace serving her as a handkerchief.

"Why should I not be glad, my pretty one? Aye, so long as Zeney lives, she has reason to be glad when all is well with Captain Jean."

"But why should you be?" repeated Mademoiselle de Cazeneuve, her manner softening somewhat at Zeney's evident sincerity. "And why should you, and every one, like him so much — such a wicked, dreadful man?"

The adjectives were indisputably harsh — more so than the manner in which they were uttered; and the violet eyes held a suggestion that the speaker would not object to knowing that her application of them was misplaced.

"Wicked — dreadful!" echoed Zeney, shaking her head violently. "No — no, never is Captain Jean either of these. And why should I not like him, when, but for him, my grandson, the only living thing I have of my own on earth, would long ago have been dead — brought out of prison, and hung by the neck?"

At this, Zeney's bowed shoulders were clasped impulsively by two small hands, and Mademoiselle de Cazeneuve sat more erect.

"Why, Zeney, I never knew you had a grandson. Tell me all about him."

"Yes, Missy, I had one; and, thanks to Captain Jean, I have one now. I raised him from a baby, for he had no daddy or mammie. He was good when he was little; but when he grew up he made friends with wicked ones and was led to do wrong. One night, in New Orleans, he was caught in a house, stealing some jewels. They took him to prison and said he should be hung. Then I went to your grandpère, M'sieur le Count, and he told me he wanted Juniper no more — that it was good for him to be hung."

"That was very cruel!" exclaimed Rose, adding softly, "Poor Zeney!"

The negress did not appear to notice the interruption; but a rapt look came into her face as she went on with her story.

"Captain Jean was there, and heard me pray to M'sieur le Count to save my boy, who was as dear to me as if we had been born white and free. Nothing said Captain Jean then, at the time. But next day Juniper was gone, no one knew where; and I thought they had killed him in the night. But Captain Jean came soon, and told me that Juniper had gone to Barataria to live with him, and that I was to grieve no more. He gave me some gold, and said he would be kind to Juniper, and try to make him a better *nègre*."

"Do you say that Captain Jean did this?"

Mademoiselle de Cazeneuve's bosom was rising and falling in a way to show that she was agitated; and a new light had driven all the petulance from her eyes.

"Truly he did, my sweet ma'am'selle. You must understand"—and the old negress uttered a significant chuckle—"that keys are often turned in the gaol locks when Captain Jean wishes it; although it will not do to whisper this. But it is truth I have told you; and I, as well as many another, could tell you more tales of his goodness to poor people—those who were unfortunate, and oppressed."

"But, if he does so much good, and is so loved, why have I heard such terrible tales of him?" was the wistfully asked question.

"Lies ride horseback, but truth walks." And Zeney shrugged her lean shoulders.

"But Mamman Zillah once told me," said Mademoiselle de Cazeneuve, with the air of one seeking to remove unpleasant doubts from the mind, "that years ago when she belonged to a man up at Contraband Bayou, she saw Captain Lafitte and two other men go into the woods, with a horse. They had shovels and picks; and she followed them

to see what they would do. She saw them digging a hole, like a grave; but it was a big chest they dug up. And there was gold in the chest, for she saw it when the men began filling some bags. Then she was so frightened for fear they would see her that she ran home to her cabin. And" — here Mademoiselle de Cazeneuve's eyes opened to their full width, and her voice took a minor note, while her manner became imbued with horrible suggestiveness — "a few hours later she saw the horse come out of the woods, with the bags across its back; but only Captain Jean came out of the woods with the horse."

Zeney laughed derisively, and again shook her head.

"That story came on horseback, Missy, along with the others you have heard, and Zillah ought to be well whipped for telling such a wicked lie. If she ever saw such a thing, then the two men had gone off in some other way to look after their own business, which was what Zillah ought to have been doing."

But Mademoiselle de Cazeneuve was, although apparently against her own will, still unconvinced, for she added impressively, "Zillah said that they afterwards found the two men dead, in the woods. And I have heard other stories, too,— of how he has made men jump into the sea, when he burned or scuttled their ships, and took all they had on board."

"Captain Jean steal! Captain Jean murder!" cried Zeney, her eyes flashing with indignation. "Such things he never did; and all such stories are lies — black lies. How can you believe them, or think of them, my honey, when you once thought him so good and noble?"

The question was unanswered; and Zeney, after a moment's pause, added, "If there is any truth in such talk, it was wicked Captain Laro who did these things; but Captain Jean — never!"

"Laro — Captain Laro!" said her young mistress, with a puzzled little frown, and raising a hand to push back the clustering hair from her now cooled cheeks. "Ah,

yes; it comes to me. I have heard my mother speak of him; it was he who brought her from France."

"It was he, too, who brought Captain Jean here to Louisiana."

"He did?" the girl asked in surprise. "And did you know him then — when he was a boy?"

The negress nodded. "He seemed a comrade then, young as he was, of the captain's — a comrade in business. He was a wicked — very wicked, man — a '*scal-lerat*,' this Captain Laro; and it was surely he, and not Captain Jean, who did the wicked deeds you have heard about, my honey."

"And where now is Captain Laro, — do you know, Zeney?"

"Dead and gone, Missy — so I've been told. And if so, then he is down with the devil, I reckon," answered the old woman grimly, rising to her feet as Lazalie's voice was heard from the hall below, calling, "Rose, my little Rose, where are you?"

CHAPTER FORTY-SEVEN

ZENEY, who had little liking for the Spanish beauty, now took herself off; and the two girls soon went downstairs together, to see the Count de Cazeneuve, whom, feeble and emaciated, they found lying back among the pillows of his chair.

They did not remain long; but his granddaughter was wishing to ask permission to stop with him. So, when Lazalie said it was nearing the dinner hour, and that they must return to La Tête des Eaux, Rose ventured, although quite timidly, to express her desire; for, in spite of all her advances, she had never succeeded in thawing the icy distance he persisted in preserving between them.

But the count, with the same courtesy with which he would have answered Lazalie, waved the request aside, adding that he needed her for nothing, and preferred that she should return to the hospitality of General La Roche.

On the floor, near the count's chair, were two sacks, which both girls saw were the counterparts of those brought to General La Roche's house that same morning; and an old negro — one who seemed trusted in his master's affairs — was on his knees, having just finished tying the mouth of one of them.

His master then, as Lazalie and Rose entered the room, making a motion for him to desist, he had subsided to the floor, apparently waiting for the call to be ended; and Mademoiselle de Cazeneuve felt that her grandfather was desirous that his visitors should leave him.

This they soon did, and were half-way across the first field, when Lazalie put an arm about the shoulder of the slight figure beside her.

"Little Rose, when I found you, I saw that you had been crying, and I've been wondering about it ever since. Will you not tell me what has been troubling you?"

But her companion was silent, and looked somewhat embarrassed.

"Had your grandfather, or any one, been scolding you? If so," Lazalie added with sudden fierceness, "I will go back and make them sorry for it."

Mademoiselle de Cazeneuve shook her head.

"Is it that Captain Jean has been frightening you?" Lazalie persisted, now with a smile.

Rose paid no heed to these queries, but, lifting a pair of earnest eyes to the dark, brilliant face, asked, "Tell me, Lazalie, have you long known Captain Jean?"

A quizzical gleam flashed into the Spanish girl's smile.

"Do you know, my infant, that you are the second one who has asked me that same question this morning?"

Then she laughingly related her conversation with young Stewart, including the annoying slip she had made, telling gayly how the young man had himself covered this up, and averted any embarrassment which might have arisen from it.

The younger girl listened with an abstracted look, making no comment; and when the story was finished she repeated her question.

"But have you long known Captain Jean, Lazalie, — please tell me?"

Lazalie came to a halt, and her lids narrowed as they dropped over her sparkling eyes, from which all laughter was gone.

"Known him long? Yes, and no. I doubt if any soul, even those nearest him, can claim truthfully to know that man. I lived for many years in my uncle's house, where Captain Jean also lived; that is, he came and went. But, for the last three years, I've not seen him until this morning."

"Was your uncle's house in New Orleans?" Rose ven-

tured to inquire, and not quite understanding why she did so.

"No," answered Lazalie, starting to walk on, her sensitive nostrils dilating and contracting, as if she might be angered at some thought of her own. "No, my little Rose; it was on an island he owned, far from here. It was Captain Jean who brought me to the sisters in the city, when my uncle died, and who afterwards placed me under the care of General La Roche."

Something in her tone — something in her face — her manner, caused a suspicion to flash through Mademoiselle de Cazeneuve's mind, impelling her to say, before realizing that she had uttered the words, "Lazalie, do you love, or hate, Captain Jean?"

Lazalie turned so fiercely that her small companion was startled, and, regretting her query, hastened to say, "You speak kindly of him; yet your eyes seem to hold no kindness for him. I myself, — do you know, I really dread him. I cannot help it, because of the stories I have heard of him. Yet Zeney has been telling me, this very morning, that the wicked stories are not true. And he did one good thing for her — saved her grandson from being hung."

She stopped, and looked earnestly at Lazalie, as if seeking some confirmation of Zeney's good opinion. But there was no response, and, knitting her brows perplexedly, Rose continued, "I cannot tell what to think about the man; for Zeney says it was not Captain Jean who killed men and burned their ships, and was a wicked pirate, but that these things were done by another man, whom Captain Jean was with, and who is now dead. This bad captain did cruel things; and people say falsely that Captain Jean did them."

"Did Zeney tell you the name of this other man — this wicked captain, who did such cruel things?" inquired Lazalie, with assumed carelessness; and her companion could not see the sullen fire in the dark eyes now staring straight ahead.

"Oh, yes; he was called Captain Laro."

Rose was startled by a peculiar laugh from Lazalie, whose face was still turned away. But the hardening curve of the red under lip, to be seen in profile, told her that she had said something to affect the Spanish beauty unpleasantly.

She could not help feeling uneasy; and after a short silence added, with the wish to say something which might give no offence, "Is it not rather odd that it was this very Captain Laro who brought my mother over from France? I loved to hear the story of how they were hidden away in an underground place, beneath an old inn, at Toulon, the night they sailed for Louisiana, and of how the ground was being shaken by the cannon-firing between the people in the city and the Revolutionists outside."

Lazalie's face had regained much of its usual expression, and Mademoiselle de Cazeneuve, feeling somewhat reassured, slipped her hand within the rounded arm of her friend.

"And my mother told me of such a handsome boy who was in the place with them that night — one this Captain Laro said he was as fond of as an own son. He had come to see them off; and my mother gave this boy a ring, and promised to pray for him. She said he was unlike any other boy she had ever seen, with the bravery and manner of a man grown."

A curious look was in the black eyes that glanced side-wise as Lazalie asked, "What was the name of this wonderful boy?"

"That I do not know; my mother never thought to mention it. But I always loved him, because of the way she talked of him."

Lazalie laughed. "Shall I tell you his name?"

"You! How can you possibly know it?"

"I happen to know, because I have heard the same tale from my uncle, who knew this boy at that time. The boy is now known to you as Captain Jean Lafitte."

"Captain Lafitte!" was the amazed, half-incredulous exclamation.

Lazalie nodded.

"Captain Jean Lafitte!" repeated Rose de Cazeneuve, her voice faint with astonishment. "And yet," she added, as if trying to grasp the wonderful fact, "he told me, when he brought me to my grandpère, that he had known my mother; but I supposed he had met her in New Orleans."

"Was it Captain Jean who brought you from the Choc-taws?" asked Lazalie, now surprised in turn. She had heard the tale of the elopement, years before, of Count de Cazeneuve's only child, and of the Island Rose being brought from the Indian country after her mother's death; but this was her first knowledge that Captain Lafitte had been concerned in the final act of the sad drama.

Mademoiselle de Cazeneuve nodded, but seemed disinclined to enter into details; and fortune favored her in this, for Lazalie said, "There is Captain Jean, now."

He was coming across the fields toward them, apparently on his way to Kanauhana. But, just as they noticed him, he took a sharp turn to the left, in the direction of the timber, where, at the edge of the woods, two men stood as if awaiting his approach. One of them was Shapira, who was leaning on a long gun; and his companion was Baptistine.

"That man with the gun is the one from whom grandpère rented our new plantation," said Rose, as the two girls, walking slowly, watched Lafitte's tall figure approaching the waiting men. "I wonder where he lives. He is always about the fields and woods; yet there is no house for many miles, except General La Roche's, and the one at Kanauhana."

Far in the depths of the wood upon whose edge Shapira and Baptistine stood, and upon the domain of Kanauhana, was the entrance to the so-called "Colonneh."

It was apparently nothing more than a ragged fissure of earth, choked by vines and tangled forest-growths, and

suggesting only the lair of a wild beast, or deadly serpent. But, some years before, an Indian had imparted its secret to Lafitte; and Shapira's deceased uncle, the former owner of Kanauhana, had been one of Barataria's most faithful agents.

In past days the Colonneh had been the receptacle for large quantities of goods awaiting transport to their owners, or the day upon which they were to be sold at auction.

Beginning at the fissure, a narrow passage, earth-walled above and on the sides, led a short distance through slimy mud, that soon became firm, where a path descended abruptly, to reach the shore of a sluggish stream.

Here, for the initiated few, three boats always lay, to be used in crossing to the opposite side, where, up another bank, a path led to a level space, from which opened several cell-like chambers, whose natural accommodations had been increased by the hand of man.

It cannot be told who was the first to discover the Colonneh; perhaps some fugitive Indian, fleeing for life, with such vengeance at his heels as made him reckless of dangers from the unknown. But it was gratitude for favors, as well as gold in hand, that had caused the Cherokee chief, Volooteeka, to reveal its secret to Lafitte, after the Indian owners had been forced to leave its neighborhood.

The stream, after passing through the Colonneh, ran for some distance between dry earth-banks, until, reaching the open air, it broadened into a sizable bayou that wandered deviously through the forest, to join at last another stream, whose course led to the vicinity of Lafitte's stronghold upon Shell Island.

CHAPTER FORTY-EIGHT

GENERAL LA ROCHE and Lafitte had held a long consultation, during which the latter had told his host of the recent visit from the English officers; of their proposition; and of Beluche's departure for New Orleans, for the purpose of laying the Baratarian offer before the governor.

He spoke unreservedly, having had many proofs of La Roche's loyalty; although the latter had not hesitated to remonstrate against his friend's occasional lapses from a strict observance of the law — that law which the general, as an officer of the State, and a friend of its governor, felt bound to respect.

But his reproofs and advice had always been taken good-naturedly by Lafitte, who would laugh rallyingly at what in no wise interfered with the strong friendship existing between the two men.

La Roche, like Lafitte, wondered at Beluche's unexplained failure to return. He also expressed surprise that, in the face of such an unusual and important event, he had not been sent for by the governor, with whom his relations, both personal and official, were very close, and who, he felt assured, would not decide the matter upon his own responsibility.

"I must go to the city this afternoon, or to-morrow morning at the latest," the general had said, when the consultation was ended, and the clock on the mantel of his study had, by chiming twelve, caused Lafitte to rise, saying that he must go over to Kanauhana, and see Count de Cazeneuve.

"But you will return soon?" said La Roche, as he also rose. "You must surely return for dinner, if for no other

reason than because the count is very feeble these days, and not a very entertaining host. I imagine, too, that the domestic affairs at Kanauhana are in rather an unsettled state."

Lafitte, nothing loath, and thinking of the sweet face he would see at the table, promised to return.

He was back within an hour, but saw nothing of Mademoiselle de Cazeneuve until all were seated at dinner, when young Stewart was giving a lively account of something that had occurred that forenoon, while he was hunting.

The story created considerable laughter; and Lafitte, noticing the softened look and gracious manner of the Island Rose toward himself, ascribed them, as well as the fearless glances with which she met his eyes, to an entirely wrong cause.

They would have made him very happy, being so like those he had formerly known, had it not been for the belief that love for another man was now tempering her feeling and attitude toward himself, just as the reality of his own hopeless love was giving his bearing toward Lazalie a gentleness he had never before accorded the girl, and which, despite her cool reception of his advances, brought a brighter color to her cheeks, and awakened in her heart a strange thrill of hope.

For, with women of Lazalie's temperament, love dies hard, if indeed it can be said to die at all.

Lafitte was telling himself that he had been brutal in his treatment of her in the Barra de Hierro days, — needlessly harsh in repelling the passionate betrayal of her girlish heart that last morning on the island, and again when leaving her at the convent. He therefore, as the dinner progressed, devoted himself almost entirely to her, and paid little apparent heed to Mademoiselle de Cazeneuve, whose attention Harold Stewart seemed happy in monopolizing.

But Rose, noticing the evident sympathy existing between Lafitte and Lazalie, grew constrained and silent, and felt curiously pained at being ignored.

The effect of Zeney's defence of Lafitte, and Lazalie's surprising information that he was the boy whom her mother knew, had, taken in connection with her former admiration for him, greatly shaken her recent prejudices; and, with womanly inconsistency, she felt hurt because he was unable to realize this alteration in her feelings.

From pain, she soon passed to anger, the exact source or nature of which she could scarcely have analyzed. But its immediate effect was that she entered into a seeming flirtation with the young Kentuckian, who was only too pleased to respond.

All this furnished a new and singular illustration of love's blindness, — these four "playing at cross purposes," and wilfully misunderstanding one another; while, beaming upon them from the head of the table, was General La Roche, his eyes and heart filled with unsuspected admiration and love for the beautiful Spanish girl, who — so far as could be inferred from appearances — regarded him simply as her friend and banker.

Just as dinner was over, a mud-bespattered negro and horse appeared before the outer door, the former bearing a letter from Governor Claiborne to General La Roche, urging his immediate presence in New Orleans.

"Why, you black scoundrel," thundered the general, his face ablaze with wrath, after he had read the letter and glanced again at its date, "this is five days old, and should have reached me four days ago!"

The frightened messenger looked woefully at his left arm, which was in a sling, and explained that, a short distance from New Orleans, down by the little Bayou d'Or, his horse had fallen and broken a leg, while he himself, pitching over the animal's head, had been stunned, and lay until found by some negroes living in a cabin near by, who had bandaged his arm and shot the horse.

"Well, what of that?" demanded the general irritably, his usual kindly consideration lost for the moment. "Why did n't you get another horse, and push on?"

The negro claimed to have done so, after being obliged to lie abed all the first day, and walk the next, there being no horse or mule to be found in the neighborhood of his mishap; and, as evidence of his inability to have delivered the message sooner, he called attention to the disreputable-looking animal he had finally secured.

"Well, well," said the general, now in a more pacified tone. "It seems that it couldn't have been avoided—the delay; so I must make the best of it, and I hope the governor will do the same. Here, boy," tossing him a handful of silver, "take this, for doing as well as you have. Lead that skeleton around to the stables if he is able to walk, and astonish him with food; then go to the kitchen and get something for yourself."

The negro, grinning with delight, picked up the coin, touched his wreck of a hat, and led the horse away, while La Roche, after explaining the matter to his guests, begged them to make themselves at home during his absence.

"Come inside with me, while I make ready to start," he said to Lafitte, after ordering his horse to be saddled; "I want a few words with you."

"What is the excitement, general?" inquired young Stewart. "Do you suppose there can be any new demonstration from the English?"

La Roche, just entering the house, paused in the doorway to look over his shoulder and shake his head.

"I think not; I presume it is only some of our own matters to be discussed."

But when in his own room, he handed the letter to Lafitte, and fuming about, lit a cigar, while giving instructions to his valet in a most impatient fashion that bespoke mental disturbance.

The governor had written him that, having received, from an unexpected quarter, a proposal promising valuable support for the defence of New Orleans, he had called a meeting of officials and prominent men of

the city, at which he — the general — was urged to be present.

"I see," said Lafitte, after perusing the letter, "that the conference was to have taken place two evenings ago."

The two men sat facing one another, with the negro valet coming and going as he packed his master's saddle-bags; and La Roche, who was staring moodily at nothing, appeared not to have heard the remark.

Lafitte spoke again.

"Of course you noticed that this conference was set for two evenings since?"

"Yes — damn it!" replied La Roche, rousing from his abstraction. "But I doubt if Claiborne takes any decisive action before I can get to him. As to that," he added, "there is but the one thing to do; and that is —"

He checked himself, and glanced at the negro boy, whom he ordered to close the door, then, when this was done, said, "You'll stop here until I return?"

Lafitte shook his head. "No; I shall get back to Barataria. Beluche must now be there; and perhaps a messenger is on the way here, sent by him."

"Then why not wait until the messenger comes?"

"Because it is not always prudent to wait for uncertainties."

"Well, then — that's an end to it," said La Roche. "But I trust you'll not fail to come and let me celebrate with you over this delightful change in your affairs. You will be placed in the position I have always felt that you deserved, and wished to see you occupy."

"You think, then, that there can be no doubt of Barataria's offer meeting with favor?"

"How can there be?" was the dogmatically put question. "Claiborne will not be so foolish — so lacking in foresight, at such a time as this. But," now showing a little anxiety, "even should he refuse, you will not go over to the British?"

The flash of Lafitte's eyes would have been sufficient answer to this. But he said quietly, "In such a case I shall remain neutral."

"And if the British attack Barataria?" suggested La Roche.

"Then Barataria will defend herself."

CHAPTER FORTY-NINE

LAFITTE, after the departure of General La Roche, permitted himself the solace of tarrying an hour or so longer, although he exchanged scarcely half a dozen words with Mademoiselle de Cazeneuve, as they, with Lazalie and Harold Stewart, sat on the broad veranda.

"Are you taking up arms for Louisiana, may I ask, Captain Jean?" the younger man ventured to inquire; apropos of a discussion they had been having in regard to the war and its probable result.

"I hope to be able to do so," was the guarded reply.

Lafitte's tone and manner were faultlessly courteous; but there was in them something to check further inquiry, even from one less sensitive than Stewart.

"Heavens!" sighed Mademoiselle de Cazeneuve. "What a dreadful thing it is — this talk of war! First it was those horrible Creeks who threatened us, and now it is the English."

"Which do you prefer, Miss Rose — the Creeks, or the English?" asked young Stewart, who sat next her, and who, as he spoke, with a teasing smile upon his lips, leaned forward to look into her face.

"For my part, I prefer the Indians," declared Lazalie, lazily swaying a large black fan, its spangles glinting in the afternoon light.

The young man turned quickly to the speaker. Her face was unsmiling, and an angry fire was in her eyes.

"Prefer the redskins!" he exclaimed. "I cannot admire your taste. I have no liking for the English; but they are surely better than the Creeks."

"I disagree with you altogether," replied Lazalie, with a wilful toss of her head, and shutting her fan with a snap. "The Indians, in their cruelty, are never so inexcusably cruel as the English. They may be bad enough; but I maintain that the English are far worse."

"Oh, Lazalie, how can that be true?" asked Mademoiselle de Cazeneuve, straightening her slight figure. "The Indians do such fiendish things to their enemies."

"And is that the way you stand up for your friends, my little Rose?" demanded the Spanish girl, with smiling raillery.

Mademoiselle de Cazeneuve's face flushed, and she replied with considerable warmth, "I admit that the Indians, as friends and neighbors, are very kind; but we are now speaking of them as they are on the war-path."

Lazalie did not reply. Her eyes were fixed upon Lafitte, who, unconscious of this, was looking into the younger girl's animated face. His expression was an absorbed one, as if he might be trying to solve a problem of his own devising.

"Captain Jean," said the Spanish girl, a half-mocking smile curving her lips, "why are you so silent?"

He started from his evident abstraction.

"I beg your pardon, Señorita — but what was it you said?"

His eyes turned toward her, but only for an instant; then they wandered off toward the belt of forest trees, whose stirless branches were gathering bosky shadows.

She laughed, and shot a curious look at his averted face.

"I want to know" — and her voice held a pronounced insistence — "what you have to say as to the choice between an English and Indian enemy. Will you not take my side against these other two, who prefer English cruelties, rather than those of the Indians?"

"There is little choice when war and self-interest do away with customary restraints," Lafitte replied, with an

air of but slight interest in the matter under discussion. "But the Indians are cruel by nature, by inheritance and training; and so, in being cruel, they are merely true to themselves. It must be admitted that the history of this country shows the Indian to have been cruel in defence of his rights, which the white man has tried to usurp, while as for the English—they practise cruelty for conquest and aggrandizement."

"I am answered, and Captain Jean agrees with me," Lazalie declared, nodding triumphantly at Rose and Harold Stewart. "What he has said is precisely what I think; and that is why I like the Indians better than the English—because the Indians are honest in their cruelty. The English, although pretending to be the earth's elect, can be fully as cruel; they are therefore far more blamable and despicable for their actions, which are prompted by selfishness and tyranny."

Lafitte did not reaffirm his carelessly expressed opinion; but, recalling the plan laid before him by his English visitors at Barataria, to be put into operation after the capture of New Orleans, he felt entire acquiescence in Lazalie's views.

He was unaccountably anxious and depressed; there seemed to be something in the air about him that set his nerves a quiver, and filled him with strange feelings.

He could, of course, attribute this to the tension he was under by reason of having no direct tidings from Beluche, as well as to his disquietude over what he feared were unmistakable signs of Rose de Cazeneuve's growing attachment for Harold Stewart.

As for that handsome young gentleman, no one could see him in her presence, and fail to detect the state of his heart.

It was after three o'clock when, with a reluctance of which his manner gave no hint, Lafitte rose and signified that he must be going.

"Will you not come again soon?" asked Lazalie, a new

wistfulness showing in her face and voice, as he extended his hand to her.

"Yes, I think so," was his smiling reply, while, for a second only, he held her fingers in a formal clasp. "Surely in less than two years, which I think is the time since we last saw one another."

It had been three years; yet the girl disdained to remind him of a fact for which he cared so little as to remember incorrectly. But the brightness faded from her face, as, waving her sparkling fan with measured slowness, she sank again into her chair.

"Shall I see you in New Orleans?" inquired young Stewart, shaking hands with Lafitte. "I will soon be there myself, as I have decided to go to General Jackson and ask him to accept myself and my gun, which weapon I shall hope to change into a sword."

His boyish frankness was not to be resisted by Lafitte; and the latter's kindly feeling was increased by Stewart's strong facial resemblance to Greloire, as he had appeared in early life. He therefore, while not answering the young man's query, replied, with a warmth he had not before shown, "You begin modestly, Mr. Stewart; but I understand that modesty is a quality General Jackson likes to see, and is liable to reward."

Harold laughed significantly. "I ought to know that, Captain Jean, from what my father has told me. By the way, did I not understand that you knew him when he was in New Orleans?"

"I met him several times, years ago," answered Lafitte, somewhat constrainedly. "I was then scarcely more than a boy; and it is not probable that Colonel Stewart would be able to recall my existence."

"To me, sir, such a thing seems very unlikely," declared Stewart, with marked emphasis, and looking with manifest admiration at the elder man.

Lafitte's only reply was a smile; and turning to say adieu to Mademoiselle de Cazeneuve, he saw that she had left the

veranda, and was standing on the lawn, some little distance from the house.

She was looking off toward the woods, and said, as Lafitte paused beside her, "There is the man from whom grandpère rented Kanauhana, sitting under a tree, with his gun."

"He expects to see me before I go, and is waiting for the opportunity," Lafitte explained, his voice softening as it always did when addressing her.

She glanced up at him, the sensitive color showing in her cheeks, now dimpling with the old days' trustful smile, as she met the look he bent upon her.

The voices of Lazalie and Harold Stewart came in gay bantering; and the two were evidently paying little attention to the man and girl below the veranda.

The violet eyes and the dark ones looked into each other; then a shapely brown hand possessed itself gently of a small white one.

"Oh, Captain Jean, I am so sorry — so very sorry! Will you not say that you forgive me?"

She spoke impulsively, in a half-whisper: and the other small hand was now laid over the back of the brown one.

Her look and words, the faint pressure of her fingers, sent a wild joy through his veins.

"Forgive you, child!" His tone was as low as her own. "What can I ever have to forgive in you, little Rose?"

She wondered afterwards at the husky tremulousness of his voice, which seemed vibrating with his fierce heart-throbs.

This, and his look, held her mute, while he drew both her unresisting hands against his breast.

"God in Heaven bless you for those words. Only there can never be any forgiveness between us, save as you may give me Heaven, by forgiving me. Try and trust me, child. Try and believe that I am not the monster you have thought me. Do this, and you can save me from what has been an earthly hell."

She looked startled; but the glad light showing in her eyes was assurance that she was not offended by his passionate pleading.

"Adieu, now," he whispered, bending so close that his breath stirred the bright hair rippling over her forehead. "Adieu, and God's angels keep you. I hope to see you soon again."

He was gone; but her hands still tingled from his close touch, and his low, tense voice still thrilled her ears.

She stood looking at the tall, athletic figure striding rapidly away over the lawn, and then across the fields, to the woods. The man with the gun also had seen it, and stood, as if waiting, until Lafitte reached him, when they entered the timber, Lafitte in advance, and were lost amid the trees.

With a joyously beating heart that made her inclined to weep as well as sing, the girl ascended with fleet steps to the veranda, and was entering the house, when Lazalie called to her, and young Stewart added remonstratingly, "Cruel Miss Rose, pray do not run away again, as you did this morning."

Mademoiselle de Cazeneuve answered hurriedly, to the effect that she was going for a piece of embroidery, and fled to her room. And when there, she, instead of performing her ostensible errand, locked the door, and threw herself upon the bed.

She was laughing, but with tears crowding to her throat, and trying to get into her eyes, where, for appearance's sake, she did not care to have them show.

She did not ask herself why it was, what it meant, or what it might mean, to her life. She knew only a half-delirious joy, such as never before had come to her.

Ah, how (as she now admitted to herself) she had missed him out of her life — her brave, handsome Captain Jean! How she had missed his chivalrous, protecting friendship, — the latent strength and decision showing in all he did and said! How she had missed the gentleness and reverence with which he always addressed her, — the kindly deeds he was always striving to do for her!

She had missed him so greatly that her world had been a waste place for lack of him and of her faith in him.

How could she have permitted herself to believe the wicked falsehoods to which she had listened? How unjust and cruel they were — how base and cowardly! And now, with her womanhood fully awakened by his look, his tone and words; with all the love of her heart going out to him, and telling her that she belonged to him, she said, with a recklessness quite equal to his own, that, even if the tales had been true, they should make no difference to her, so long as he was what he seemed now.

She found much comfort in recalling all that Zeney had told her that same morning.

“Good old Zeney,” the girl declared to herself. “She shall have a new pair of beautiful gold ear-rings; and I shall tell her so to-morrow.”

Harold Stewart was, for the remainder of the day, greatly puzzled over Mademoiselle de Cazeneuve’s demureness. She appeared to be entirely absorbed in the intricate stitches of her embroidery, and sat silently, with an air of not ill-satisfied preoccupation, while he and Lazalie talked, or sang to one another’s accompaniment on the piano or guitar.

So passed the afternoon, but, in the evening, Mademoiselle de Cazeneuve, in consequence of the others’ urgings, took the guitar and sang the song which she had always associated with the journey from her Indian home: —

Beneath the storm that racks the sky,
The summer roses sigh.
Whipped by the blast, their petals fly;
Rain-drenched, they strew the earth, and lie
Scattered beyond recall.

The storms will pass, and after rain
The sunshine come again.
But warmth and brightness all are slain;
For summer roses, torn and slain,
Can bloom again no more.

As the melody died away, Lazalie said with an air of remonstrance, "Ah, little Rose, that is too sad. Try again, and take from my heart the ache you have put into it."

And Harold Stewart added, assuming a mock-lugubrious look that illy became his frank face, "Please do, Miss Rose, for I am almost ready to weep. Be charitable, and sing something to cheer me."

"What shall it be?" she asked, dropping her white lids to shut away the ardent fire burning in his blue eyes.

"Something lively and gay; something stirring. Can't you give us a pirate song, for instance?"

The girl hesitated, but only for a moment; then, with a look of mingled mischievousness and defiance, she went to the piano.

The room rang with a few bold, resonant chords; and ere the vibrations had ceased, she began, in a voice that did not seem her own, the "Song of the Buccaneers."

An expression of amazement made Lazalie's face stern, and a sudden glitter, as of tears, shone in her black eyes. But young Stewart saw nothing of this, his attention being entirely absorbed by the song and singer.

While Mademoiselle de Cazeneuve was singing the final verse, Lazalie rose quietly from her chair; and when the last strain of rollicking melody sprang from the younger girl's lips, she felt the firm pressure of a hand upon her shoulder.

"Tell me, Rose, where did you learn that?"

A gay laugh was the only response, while Stewart applauded vigorously, and begged for a repetition of the song.

But Rose shook her head; and Lazalie exclaimed, "No, no! I could not endure to hear it again."

That night, as Barbê was brushing Mademoiselle de Cazeneuve's hair, preparatory to rebraiding it, Lazalie, looking very tall in the clinging folds of her scarlet silk wrapper, entered the room.

"I will do that, little Rose," she said, in her usual imperative fashion. "I want to talk with you."

After bidding Barbê go to bed, her mistress resigned herself to the white, skilful hands that deftly threaded the sunny lengths of soft hair, until Lazalie asked — and her voice held a curious note of sadness, “Will you please tell me, Rose, how you happened to know that old pirate song?”

As there was no immediate reply, Lazalie continued, “It has strange associations for me. I have not heard it in years; and I never expected to hear it here, and be reminded of all it brings back.”

Her voice had an uncertain sound, and the last words were spoken tremulously.

Rose looked at the beautiful dark face reflected in the mirror before her, as she answered softly, “I heard Captain Jean sing it.”

“Did he teach you — you, of all others in the world — such a song as that?”

Mademoiselle de Cazeneuve, surprised at the indignation sounding in the Spanish girl's voice, turned to look up into her face.

“No — oh, no, Lazalie. He sang a few words of it one night, when we were camping; and I begged him to sing all the verses. He did so, to please me, and laughed when I asked him several times afterwards to sing it for me. That is the way I happened to learn it.”

“When you were camping? You mean when he brought you from your Indian home?”

“Yes. I was to him nothing more than a child, to be amused and diverted; and I have always remembered how good he was to me.”

“Yes; he can be very kind when he chooses,” said Lazalie, her tone sharp with sarcasm. “But children and niggers seem to be the ones who most frequently make him so.”

Her hands trembled slightly as she now began gathering her friend's hair for the second heavy braid.

It was evident, however, that her mind was burdened

with something of which she desired to speak ; for, as she separated the strands, she said nervously, " Little Rose, I think I will tell you a secret ; only I fear it may lessen your love for me, or perhaps change it into another feeling."

" No, Lazalie, — never !" was the earnest and emphatic reply. " I am sure that nothing can ever do that."

" No? Well, I should like to think so," said Lazalie, a richer color coming to her face. " But there is something you may hear of me ; and I would prefer to tell it myself, and now."

She paused, not from irresolution, but to gather her voice, which had shown signs of breaking.

" It is that Captain Laro, of whom you told me this forenoon, was my uncle."

" Oh, Lazalie !" gasped Rose, recalling all she had said. " How can you ever —"

" Never mind, child," the Spanish girl interrupted, in a tone which might have been reassuring, had it not been for the bitterness tinging it. " You told nothing that was not true ; and you did not tell half if you knew it. But I knew nothing of this when he was alive. He was always very, very good to me ; and I must not — cannot, speak unkindly of him now. That old song was one of his. He sang it often ; and so did —"

She checked the name upon her lips, and said, instead, " Many others at our island home. But never let me hear *you* sing that song again, my pure, sweet little Rose."

The finished braid dropped from her hands, and kneeling, she laid her cheek against Rose's pink-clad shoulder as she said, with what sounded like a sob, " Tell me that you do not despise me for what I have told you."

" Dear, dear Lazalie," replied a tender voice, while a soft, warm cheek was laid against the darker one, " how could you ever think I would do such a thing? I am filled with sorrow for speaking as I did of your uncle. But, dear, how could I know?"

" Never mind, child," said Lazalie again, kissing the

perturbed face. "You said nothing but the truth; and you could not have imagined that it was a matter affecting me. Let us never speak of it again. But I am so relieved to have told you — that now you know the very worst of me, and yet can love me."

"Indeed yes — more than ever." And Lazalie's kiss was returned.

CHAPTER FIFTY

THE sun was nearly two hours high on the following day when the boat bearing Lafitte back to Grande Terre stole out from the wooded mouth of the Bayou, where the dark water left the shadows of the forest, to mingle with the sparkling current of the gulf, curling, in a smother of foam, like hissing yeast, over the beach below Barataria's stronghold, and stretching away, blue and glittering, with weltering spaces of violet gloom cast by the clouds that sailed beneath the clear, turquoise-hued sky.

Looking toward the island, Lafitte noticed an unusual volume of smoke lingering above the tree-tops, and wondered why the men had so much fire at this hour of the day. Then, turning his eyes to the east, he saw a fleet of vessels apparently going down the gulf.

Snatching a spyglass, he soon found this to be the fact; and he saw that some of the vessels resembled his own, several of which were gone from their accustomed mooring-places.

"Go to the west landing," he said to Baptistine, without removing the glass from his eye.

Baptistine gave the order, and then returned to his former place, where Lafitte stood sweeping the gulf and Grande Terre, his manner indicating newly awakened suspicion.

While the boat sailed down the island's shore the smoke against the southwest sky showed more dense, and Baptistine, pointing to it, said, "That smoke looks to be not innocent camp-fire nor chimney smoke, my captain."

Lafitte was about to reply, when the boat came abreast of an opening in the trees, through which some of the buildings were seen to be on fire.

A chorus of exclamations and execrations broke from Baptistine and the crew, and one of the latter cried out, "This is the work of those cursed English!"

Lafitte raised his hand to command silence.

"Yonder vessels did it, rather than the English," he said, in a voice husky with rage, as he pointed to the disappearing fleet.

"And they are flying the United States flag!" shouted another of the crew, who had taken the spyglass lying near him, and was looking through it.

"Shall we venture to land, my captain?" inquired Baptistine.

"Draw closer," said Lafitte, turning to the crew, who were staring with fury-filled eyes at the seemingly deserted island. "Draw closer, and I will signal. But be in readiness to turn about, in case I wish to head for Shell Island."

He waited until the boat was nearer the shore, and then, arching a hand over his lips, sent a water-bird's shrill call ringing out twice over the water.

Not ten seconds passed when a similar call came from the island, followed by the appearance of a figure upon the edge of the timber.

It was Nato, who waved his arms wildly and came scrambling down to the beach.

His torn clothing, his scratched and bleeding face emphasized his half-frantic terror, and brought to Lafitte the conviction that, during his absence, some dire disaster had fallen upon Grande Terre.

In a most disjointed fashion, and accompanied by hysterical sobbing, Nato told all that he knew of a story which, for bad faith and harsh procedure, has few equals in history.

Early that morning soldiers from several vessels had descended upon Grande Terre. There had been desperate fighting; and all the Baratarians who were not now lying

dead on the bluff above had been carried off as prisoners. Not only this, but, before leaving, the conquerors had set fire to the buildings, and had taken with them all of Lafitte's vessels for which they could find crews.

Nato, Juniper, and Scipio had fled from the stockade to the thicker woods and more impenetrable part of the island; but they became separated, and the boy had seen nothing more of his two companions.

"Dey was dose Britishers, Marse Cap'n," he declared between his sobs, and digging his fists into his eyes. "An' dey was cruel as ingins. Dey eben killed all der dogs."

The men began to mutter curses; but Lafitte checked them.

"What was the color of their coats?" he asked of the boy.

"Dey wore blue coats, Marse Cap'n."

"As I thought," said Lafitte calmly, turning to his men. "No British enemy has dealt us this blow; it was the Governor of Louisiana."

He then started up the bluff, the others following, with Nato bringing up the rear.

Before pausing to investigate the extent of the disaster, or to examine the many dead forms lying about, Lafitte set his men to work checking the flames. When this was accomplished, he ordered Baptistine to have the men bury their dead comrades; and he himself went amongst them, to note who had fallen, dreading, until he had finished his task, lest his eyes might rest upon Pierre's dead face. But Catalon was the only leader found among the slain Baratarians.

Jean Lafitte was never calmer than now, when it seemed as if irretrievable misfortune had overtaken him; his low voice and collected manner gave no hint of the volcano seething within, making his face murderous with vengeful light.

Inside the stockade were many signs of a fearful hand-to-

hand fight. The house of the Lafittes was unharmed, although there were indications of its having been set on fire; but the flames appeared to have died out of themselves.

Blood was upon the steps, and upon the oaken floor of the living-room. Tables and chairs were overturned and broken; and, in the silence, amid the mutely speaking débris, the clock was tinkling its little melody that followed the hour of four.

Near it, in a pool of blood which suggested something to make Lafitte's cheek pale under its swartness, was Pierre's hat, and the haft of a knife he had worn in his belt.

Jean stood motionless, staring at these, until Nato, creeping into the room, aroused his attention; and turning to the boy, he demanded to know when he had last seen Captain Pierre.

"Marse Cap'n Pierre?" stammered Nato, his eyes roving about the room. "He was done settin' yonder, by dat 'ar table, readin' sump'in', an' waitin' for Scipio ter fotch breffus. I war out in de kitchen, wid Scipio, an' we all hearn tunderrin' guns let go pow'ful sudden. An' goler-mighty, Marse Cap'n Jean, 'fo' yer could say 'Amen,' dar was er let go all ober de place, a-shootin' an' killin'; an' right dar I lit out fo' der woods, 'long o' Scipio an' Juniper, an' I nebber see Marse Cap'n Pierre no mo'."

"You were not a very brave soldier, were you, Nato?" said Lafitte, with what seemed the shadow of a smile — something that touched his lips, and was gone.

For a moment the boy hung his head in shamed silence. But looking up, he saw that his presence was forgotten, and wondering what his master was staring at so rigidly, followed his glance, and saw the bare space over the mantel.

"Golermighty, Marse Cap'n Jean, — ef dey ain't done toted off de new picter!"

Lafitte motioned him to be gone, and following slowly, closed and locked the door.

There was nothing more to be done at Barataria. All

the men, save Baptistine and his crew, appeared to have been killed or captured; the buildings were burned or despoiled; the vessels taken. Lafitte, therefore, putting aside as best he could all emotion and anxiety, gathered what was left of his portable property, and, with Baptistine and his crew, together with Nato, Juniper, and Scipio (the latter two having, late in the day, come from their hiding-place in the woods), took his way to Shell Island.

The older negroes could tell him little more than Nato had already related. Neither could they give him any information bearing upon Pierre's probable fate. There was left only the hope that he had escaped to Shell Island, where he might be found, alive at least, if not unhurt.

But in this Lafitte was disappointed. Dominique-You and some of his men had escaped; but the former had seen Pierre, who appeared to be wounded, carried to a boat, and taken out to the ships.

It was not until some time after this that Lafitte gathered a reliable account of the affair, and knew the reason for this murderous descent upon Barataria. The facts were these:

Beluche had been received amicably by Governor Claiborne, who, after reading Lafitte's letter, setting forth in detail the recent offer from the English, listened to all the Baratarian messenger had to say, and informed him that he must, before deciding upon a reply, consult with certain other officials. He then, however, while treating Beluche and Lopez with perfect courtesy, held them as prisoners.

The conference, in pursuance of invitations similar to that received by General La Roche, was held promptly; and a large majority of its members having refused to believe the truth of Lafitte's statements, Governor Claiborne, although himself in favor of accepting the Baratarian proposition, allowed the others to over-rule him.

This decision was, however, kept from the knowledge of Lafitte's messengers, as was also the fact that a large armed force was quickly organized to descend upon Grande Terre.

Before the expedition left New Orleans, Beluche and Lopez, with their men, were incarcerated in the common gaol and their vessel was seized. But one of the crew was, by a generous bribe and promise of pardon, induced to act as guide; and he it was who piloted the fleet, and gave information that caused the Baratarians to be surprised.

More bitter than ever before were Lafitte's thoughts that night and the following day. The bright horizon that had seemed to promise him a fairer morning than he had ever hoped to behold, — this was now obscured by dense clouds, blacker than ever his life had known.

All seemed hopeless, — so hopeless that, as he reviewed the situation, he became stunned beyond all ability to feel the rage which at another time would have been likely to control him.

But, true to his nature, he did not permit himself to be overwhelmed by the great disaster and sorrow that had come upon him. A trusty messenger had been dispatched at once to a point not far from New Orleans, where were those to be relied upon for the latest news from that city; and, upon the third day after the attack upon Grande Terre, the messenger returned with information that determined Lafitte to proceed there at once.

Pierre was at New Orleans, in gaol, wounded; some said mortally, others declared that he was dying.

Leaving Dominique-You in charge, Lafitte set out by the inland water-ways to reach a spot where he knew a horse would be at his command upon which to make the remainder of his journey to the city. Meantime he had, the day before, sent Baptistine to La Tête des Eaux to tell General La Roche (if the latter, as he reckoned, had now returned to his plantation) of all that had happened at Barataria, and to receive from him any message he might wish to send.

Wrapped in a long dark cloak, with the broad brim of his hat making a deeper shadow over his face, Lafitte, as he stepped aboard the craft that was to convey him from

Shell Island, looked a commanding figure of stern sorrow. It was twilight, with the evening star showing dimly where, through the forest boughs, came occasional glimpses of the sky, and a light scud, flying across the paled blue, promised a storm.

The rising wind was souging about the place, where were groups of men, standing, or lounging on the grass, while they smoked their pipes and talked in low tones.

From the woods about them the whippoorwills called, the owls were hooting, and a bat would now and then dart from the forest's gloom to circle overhead in pursuit of insect prey.

The men were reluctant to see their leader risk going into New Orleans, but none of them dared express this feeling in words, except as they talked among themselves.

"If any harm comes to him we'd better join the English, and help burn New Orleans," said one, as they watched Lafitte's boat pulled up the stream.

"*Caramba!*" growled a Spaniard. "It is to the cutting of the illustrious Señor Governor's throat I would prefer to give my attention."

"So would I," declared a Yankee, lounging next to the last speaker. "It is the governor's fault that Grande Terre was attacked. Captain Lafitte said so."

"Aye, we all know that," affirmed several voices; and Nato, unable to endure the hint of harm coming to his master, rose from his place on the edge of the group and stole away to join Scipio and Juniper, who were sitting by themselves before the door of Lafitte's cabin.

But here he found the same topic under discussion, for Scipio was saying to the younger negro, as if in reply to an assertion the latter had made, "Zey all so — dam! Zey Anglaise an' zey 'Merican, bose so — dam! Yo' Juniper, ef zat le capitaine he come back nevvair, den yo' bettair run — vamore away, lek le diable. Zey git yo' to choke wiz rope 'roun' yo' neck, ef zat yo' lose dey protection of le capitaine."

CHAPTER FIFTY-ONE

NIGHT in New Orleans, where the former gay life of the streets had for many weeks been hushed by the threatened calamity of an attack, or possible siege.

Within doors the anxious occupants exchanged gossip and opinions as to the latest movements of Jackson and the English, while some of them devised schemes and plots for the protection of themselves, or the furthering of selfish ends.

The air of the city, muggy and lifeless as the thunder showers of the day had left it, was still more unbearable inside the walls of the gaol, where, on the upper floor, in a cell whose one narrow, iron-barred window faced the east, lay Pierre Lafitte.

There was no light, save from the growing whiteness of the moonbeams, already barring the floor at the foot of the rude bed which the kindly hearted gaoler had provided for the wounded man, whom the loss of blood had made pitifully weak, and whose strained, spasmodic breathing told of greater and more lasting hurt.

The gaoler's wife — kind of heart as was her husband — came in with a jug of water, and filling a cup, held it to the stricken man's lips while gently raising his head.

"Is not that better?" she inquired in French, as she laid him back upon the pillow and placed the cup on a stool that held the dripping jug.

Pierre sighed, and stretching out a feverish hand, laid it against the cool clay of the jug.

"Yes; it is like the streams of Barataria. And what would I not give for a breath of the winds blowing over Grande Terre?"

"La-la," the woman said consolingly, placing her hand on his burning forehead. "Get thee well, M'sieur Pierre, so that you may feel them blow again."

She knew the identity of this prisoner, and, like many another, had reason to know of his thoughtfulness and generosity.

Her husband now called to her, and she hastened from the cell, letting the door remain open.

The gaoler was evidently speaking from the foot of the narrow stairway; and his wife, leaning over the balustrade, replied to him shrilly, every word coming distinctly to Pierre.

"The priest is here, waiting — the one Father Philipe sent to see M'sieur Pierre," the gaoler said. "Shall he come up now?"

"What looks he like, Ambrose — is he old or young?" the woman inquired.

"What matter is it how the shaveling looks, and who could tell his age? They all look as one, covered by their black devil's garb."

"Hush, Ambrose! Shame on thee for such impiety," said his wife severely. Then, in a less irate tone, "Wait there a moment, until I see."

She re-entered the cell, and came close to the bed.

"M'sieur Pierre, I trust you will not be angry with me that I sent this afternoon to Father Philipe, and asked that a priest be sent here for your comforting."

"That was very kind of you, madame, but —"

He paused in his slow speech, and the good woman exclaimed urgently, "Oh, surely you will not refuse to see him! Surely, M'sieur Pierre, you will not do that! He will give you comfort, if nothing more. And, too, after sending to Father Philipe, how can I risk offending him and the priest below?"

For a moment Pierre was silent, and, as she thought, reluctant.

"Is it Father Philipe of the Cœur de St. Jean?" he asked.

"Surely, m'sieur; and a saint himself," she answered quickly, hearing, as she thought, a wavering in Pierre's tone. "A saint, everyone says. I heard that he was sick; and it must be true, as he has not come himself—he who always tries to visit the afflicted and unfortunate."

"Very well, then, madame: you may send the priest to me," said Pierre, wearily, and wondering if by any chance he might here find a channel through which to communicate with Jean; for he had recalled the name as that of one of the latter's friends.

The woman, well pleased, took her departure, leaving the door open as before. She had reason to know how little risk there was in this, for death was rivetting its icy chains upon the man within, binding the strong limbs that nevermore would bear Pierre Lafitte out to sunlight and freedom.

She soon returned, bringing a lighted lamp, which she placed upon the floor, near the foot of the bed; and Pierre, closing his eyes to shut away the glare, did not see the tall, black-robed form that entered with her, and then motioned her to leave the room.

As she did so, the priest walked to the window and stood looking out, his back turned to the bed, until the last echo of the woman's footsteps died away. Then striding hastily to the door, he closed it softly, and, throwing back his cowl, revealed the pale face of Jean Lafitte.

Most unpriestly was the hard, rebellious curl of the mouth, and the haughty poise of the head—unpriestly the anger flashing from the black eyes that looked down at Pierre. But their expression changed to one of infinite sorrow as they rested upon the white face, whose look told Jean that he had come none too soon,

"Pierre, my brother," he said, taking care to lower his passionate voice to almost a whisper, as he dropped upon his knees beside the bed. "My poor Pierre, tell me who brought this upon thee."

Pierre's face became transfigured with joy, but he made no answer.

"Tell me who it was that hurt thee; for him must I hate as I never hated man before," urged Jean, now taking the nerveless hand lying on the coarse coverlet.

Pierre smiled, as his hot fingers clasped the cool ones that seemed throbbing with passion and revenge.

"Nay," he murmured; and his voice, although weak, held yet a note of old-time humor. "Nay, Jean, that would be a puzzle whose answer is beyond me. The bullets that found me were meant for any one of us; and the knife-thrust in my side was given by a man I never saw before. And," he added grimly, after a moment's pause, "no other on earth will ever receive another thrust from him."

"Then thou didst not leave him for me to deal with?"

"No; for I left the blade of my knife in his heart. But ah, my Jean, what treacherous work it was, — what a base return for thy frankness and generosity!"

Jean tossed his head impatiently.

"Let us not waste time in talking of that. There is now but one thing to consider, my brother, and that is the getting of thee from this place. It is for that I have come, and as soon as I knew thou wert hurt. Father Philipe has every reason to help me; so I went to him, feeling that a priest would not be denied thee. Fortune helped me still more, when a message came from the gaoler's wife to Father Philipe, saying that his ministrations were needed by thee. His conscience troubled him; but he let me have my way for to-night, and will himself come to see thee in the morning."

"Did the woman send him word that Pierre Lafitte was dying?" asked the wounded man.

Jean started to his feet.

"Say not such a thing, my Pierre. If she did, it was but the silly thought of a woman; and I cannot, with patience, hear thee repeat it."

He seemed cheered by his own words, and his voice had its usual ring of confidence and decision.

"I will soon have thee out of this," he resumed, as he stood beside the bed, "and down to Shell Island, where every comfort shall be thine. But, first of all, let me take a look at thy apartment and its surroundings."

He glanced about the cell, taking in every detail of its shape and construction; then, going to the window, he was looking out, when Pierre said, in a voice so solemn as to sound utterly unlike his own, "Come back, Jean; come and sit on the bed, beside me, as thou didst when we were boys together at Languedoc."

Again the hot hand clasped the cool one, while the sad voice continued, "Listen to me, Jean, and do not interrupt, for I feel my time to be shorter than you think. I am dying, and thank God that I can die with thee near me. Having this, I ask for nothing more. 'Tis useless for thee to talk of escape. Escape I shall, and soon; for the governor will not care to hold the body after the spirit has left it."

Jean had again knelt by the bed, and now laid his cheek upon the hot hand clasping his own, while Pierre's arm went slowly about his foster-brother's neck.

"The surgeon told me that if the blood came again from my side I must reckon my life by minutes; and the blood is coming now, my brother. Nay, never mind," — as Jean started impulsively — "for canst do nothing. Let me talk to thee; that is all. Let me tell thee that I have no fear of death — none, even now, when I am going out to I know not what, and lacking that which our faith teaches us we should have, if we are to be saved. We have never talked of such things — you and I. Yet I tell thee now, Jean, that I have ever accepted God, the same as I did His

sunshine, and all else He gave. Lying here, drifting to death, I have been reviewing my life; and I cannot find that I ever knowingly, and for my own sake, did any man wilful harm. I have ever, in my heart, tried to keep unsoiled the faith in Christ's redemption — the faith my mother and Père Huot taught us. If ever I unwittingly did harm, I believe that Christ will forgive me; and so I can commend my soul fearlessly to Him, even though it must go to His mercy without help of priest or last communion."

Pierre's slow, labored speech told its own story of his weakness and the pain he was enduring; and Jean, seeing this, might have checked him. But he realized what great peace his brother was finding in this last earthly declaration of faith, and hope for the future.

He therefore remained silent, his face bowed over Pierre's hand, until he thought the latter had finished. But, as he raised his head, and was about to speak, a slight motion from Pierre stayed the words upon his lips.

"This, Jean, is enough of myself, which I tell thee only for thy comfort, when thou shalt think of me; for well I know thou wilt never forget me, be thy years many or few."

The clasp of his fingers tightened slightly, but there was no answer, save the look in Jean's face, and the heaving of his breast.

"Enough of me," Pierre repeated, in a voice which, while distinct, was weaker than before. "And now thou wilt tell me, Jean, who it is that has shared thy heart with me? Is it — the Señorita Lazalie, as I have sometimes thought? Surely thou wilt forgive me for asking the question?"

"What can it matter now, my brother — such a thing as love of mine?"

Jean's head was lifted a little, and his husky, uncertain voice was so filled with despair as to give a tinge of indifference to his words.

"As I know thy nature — everything." And the weak

fingers tightened again. "I wish I could know that she would love thee as thou dost deserve; that she would go with thee back to Languedoc — leave forever this cursed life of Louisiana."

"Do not let us talk of it," urged Jean, speaking with tender authority. "All I had hoped for is now but a bygone dream. It can never be realized; for, after what has happened, my name can be nothing but one of infamy, and I would never ask a woman to share it."

"And is it the *Señorita*?" asked Pierre, gently, yet insistently, laying his free hand upon the bowed head.

"No, it was Count de Cazeneuve's granddaughter," answered a smothered voice.

"The little 'Island Rose,' as the Indians called her?" said Pierre, with a surprise and pleasure which seemed to give him new strength. "Ah, Jean, I am glad. I saw her only once; but that is sufficient for me to know that she is true, and pure of heart — the one I would have thee love. But do not despair, my brother, for surely it will come out well for thee; I feel that it will."

He stopped for a few moments, as if to gather more strength; and when he spoke again his tone was more incisive.

"Jean, I can see it all as it will be, if thou wilt do as I say."

"What is that?" And Jean, lifting his head, looked into the changed eyes, now holding a new and strange expression — one that was plainly discernible even in the faint light.

"Go to the governor, in person, or, better still, go to Jackson when he shall come. Renew the offer, and show the original papers sent to thee by the English. Thou hast them safely?"

"Yes, they never have left my possession."

"Good. Take them to the governor, and to Jackson. I heard that Claiborne would have accepted thy proposition, but was over-ruled by the others. I beg, as the last

thing I can ask of thee on earth, to show the papers to Jackson. Promise me to do this, and all will be well with thee and thine."

The eager voice was hushed. Then, in the silence, Jean raised his head, and the two men, with hands clasped, stared into each other's eyes, — the one pair eloquent with pleading that, for the moment, mastered the death-light shining under the pallid brow; the other pair blazing with the rage that leaped forth through their despairing sorrow.

"Wilt thou not promise this?" Pierre whispered.

Another brief silence, and then Jean answered with a passion he tried vainly to repress. "I would not, to save my life, give this promise to another. But, my Pierre, as thou hast asked it from me — yes."

His voice was broken, and he bent his head as would an humbled penitent.

The moon's rays had stolen up until the shadows of the window-bars lay across the clasped hands, and struggled faintly along the whitewashed wall, untouched by the light from the dimly-burning lamp.

"Then can I go in peace," had come like a sigh from the paling lips, as Jean's head was laid against Pierre's shoulder.

"Put out the lamp," added the dying man; "let us have only the moonlight."

This done, Jean resumed his place by the bed, and again took the hand lying so white in the moon-rays.

A deep, struggling sigh stirred the silence.

"What is it, my Pierre — art thou in pain?"

There was no reply.

"Pierre, my brother, tell me — art thou in pain?" Jean repeated, conscious that the hand he held lay heavy, and was growing cooler.

He laid it tenderly on the coverlet, and, rising, pulled the bed out, so that it was bathed in a flood of moonlight.

The whitening radiance touched the half-parted lips and wide-open eyes of a face whose cold pallor would show even whiter in the morning's sun.

Truly had Pierre's premonition been verified; never would those sightless eyes behold the France he had longed to see once more.

CHAPTER FIFTY-TWO

THE morning of September 14 was clear and cloudless, with the brisk wind distending the canvas of H. B. M. brig "Sophia," as she made her way toward the little island off the East Pass known as "The Turtle."

It was a mere patch of rank vegetation, and, seen from a distance, looked much like the upper shell of the reptile whose name it bore.

There had been little doubt amongst the English as to Lafitte's decision; and their opinion had been strengthened to a certainty by reason of the recent attack upon Barataria, the details of which had been reported to Captain Percy.

It was therefore with a very complacent mind that Captain Lockyer looked ahead at the little island lying on the heaving water, with the noonday heat shimmering in a dazzle of prismatic coloring over its green growths.

He was feeling confident and elated over the prospective outcome of his negotiations; and a few bars of "God Save the King," came, flute-like, from his puckered lips, as he stared at the bit of land which his small boat was rapidly approaching.

He was soon ashore, and glanced around expectantly; but no one was to be seen. A flock of water-fowl rose from the rank grass in front of him, and flew farther inland; and a pair of pelicans, startled from their ruminations in a near-by thicket, flapped heavily away.

While looking mechanically at the awkward birds, his eyes were attracted by a large piece of white paper, outspread upon the impaling thorns of a bush only a few yards

off. He went toward it, and soon read what wrought a decided change in his expression of complacency, besides bringing an oath from his lips.

Then, plucking the paper from the bush, he crushed it in his hand, and turning about, went back to his boat, where, with a look of disappointment and rage that told his crew of something having gone wrong, he ordered them to push off.

The paper he was carrying back to the "Sophia" as the result of his mission contained only these words:

SEPTEMBER 14, 1814.

I will accept no favor from, and conclude no terms with, those who make allies of Indians, who incite slaves to insurrection, and whose own cruelty matches well that of their savage associates.

JEAN LAFITTE.

It was not until the "Sophia" had lifted her anchor that a woolly head and pair of shining eyes rose from a bit of tangled undergrowth directly opposite the bush upon which the paper had been displayed, and Nato hastened to the other end of the island, where a boat containing Dominique-You and two of his men awaited him.

As they pulled away from the beach, Nato gave a satisfied chuckle, and said, in reply to Dominique's impatient inquiry, "Yes, sah: de redcoat, he done come sure 'nuff, an' der paper ye done stuck on de bush he toted off in his coat. Reckon he was pow'ful mad, too, Massa Dominique, kase he swore like der debbil."

"Ver' well — damn him," was Dominique's growling comment. "It was well for the British red-bird that La Capitaine order me, stop here in boat, an' not go ashore."

Matters at Shell Island had now come to be clearly defined and understood. All the men knew, from Lafitte's statement to them, of the English attempt to buy their allegiance and service; they knew also of the threatened vengeance if that offer was rejected. And Lafitte had little trouble in persuading them to acquiesce in his proposed

offer to Jackson, when the latter should arrive in New Orleans.

But he was careful to conceal from his followers all knowledge of the disastrous attempt already made, lest this might cool their patriotism. He had, with respect to this, and after much argument, persuaded Dominique-You to agree upon keeping silence.

Prison doors were not so easily opened as in the past. Beluche and Lopez were still under confinement, together with their crew, and the recently captured Baratarians.

The days at Shell Island passed monotonously. Once, in October, Lafitte made a trip to La Tête des Eaux, where he found only Lazalie and Madame Riefêt, General La Roche's sister, who had, for the present, closed her New Orleans house, and was stopping in what her brother considered a safer locality.

The general himself spent much of his time in the city; and Mademoiselle de Cazeneuve was now at Kanauhana, where her grandfather was dying. Harold Stewart had gone to New Orleans, where he was awaiting the arrival of General Jackson, having already received a military appointment from Governor Claiborne.

After hearing from Lazalie of Rose, and her loneliness, picturing her beside her grandfather's deathbed, and recalling the look upon her upraised face when he left her, and the words she had uttered, Lafitte longed to see her, if only to extend his sympathy.

But this he would not do, feeling that, as matters were with him, it might be stealing from her innocence that which he had no right to seek.

Then, too, if she had heard of the recent happenings at Barataria, what might she now be thinking of him?

It was a question he could not answer, and he shrank from the possibility of seeing her again recoil from him, as once she had done.

That she would have heard of his disaster there was little doubt; for Lazalie had met him with both hands ex-

tended, and a dimness of tears in her eyes as she said, "Captain Jean, I am so glad to see you again, and that you were not forced to accept the governor's hospitality. And we were all so sorry for your brother's —"

She hesitated; and Lafitte said quietly, but with unmistakable firmness, "I thank you truly, Lazalie; I understand what you would say, and thank you for it. But please let us talk of something else."

Mindful of Rose's love for marsh-lilies, he had brought a large bunch of them from Shell Island, where they grew in great luxuriance and beauty; and now handing them to Lazalie, he requested that she give them to Mademoiselle de Cazeneuve, with his compliments.

"Then you will not go over to Kanauhana to-day?" she asked, while inhaling the fragrance of the flowers.

Before he could reply, Madame Riefêt, who had entered the room and overheard Lazalie's question, exclaimed volubly, "Is it not pitiful to think of that poor child over there, with only the negroes about her, and that snappy old Barbê!"

"But you know, dear madame," Lazalie said, with marked remonstrance, "that she seems to wish to be alone. Both of us," she added, now looking at Lafitte, as if to assure herself that he was not thinking her negligent, "have offered to go to Rose; but she refused to have it so."

"Oh, yes, — of course," admitted Madame Riefêt, as she sank into the nearest chair and carefully arranged her skirts. "But I still maintain that it seems a pity, for what can such a child know of death? Mercy! When I was her age the very idea of seeing any one die would make me fly from the house."

She spoke theatrically, with uplifted brows and raised hands; for the erratic, fashionable Madame was, in person and manner, more decidedly French than was her brother.

"We are not, however, all alike in that respect, I take it," said Lazalie nervously, for she felt that, in the face of

recent events, such talk must be jarring to Lafitte, and she wondered what might be his thoughts as he stood looking through the window toward Kanauhana.

Madame Riefêt's frivolous remark had brought before him the picture of that little island where he had first seen the figure, scarcely more than a child's, clad in a gayly-fringed buckskin dress, with beaded leggings and moccasins, and clinging to a still form from which the breath had but just departed.

"Speak once more to your little Rose!" she had wailed. And he, hardened by frequent contact with death, could not, until now, realize the full depth of such a sorrow.

Would it be thus when her grandfather died? No, he answered, finding a strange comfort in the thought; for Count de Cazeneuve had been too repellent of her timid proffers of affection. He had given her his name, his protection, and his wealth; but his love had been unknown to her.

This, although to be regretted during the count's lifetime, was — as Lafitte told himself — well for her now; for one sorrow such as she had sustained brings with it all the suffering that any young heart should be called upon to endure.

This he now understood far better than on the day when he, a stranger, looked down upon that passionately grieving daughter. He knew that he had not, at the time, been capable of a sympathy now brought home to him by the very recollection of her sorrow.

He realized it now, when he had that moonlit cell to remember; the dead face lying in the silver radiance; the unseeing eyes; the parted lips, forever mute, but which, a moment before, were murmuring words that, in the last instant of earth-thought, as in all the years ago, were for him and his welfare.

This it was that made Jean Lafitte's face look pale and his manner seem stern, as, after forcing himself to listen for awhile to Madame Riefêt's volatile chatter, he took his departure.

CHAPTER FIFTY-THREE

EARLY in December, 1814, General Jackson arrived at New Orleans.

Lafitte had, some time before this, at Shell Island, seen a copy of the proclamation issued by Jackson while yet at Mobile, after the general had received from Governor Claiborne a full statement of the proposition made to Lafitte by the English, together with the Baratarian leader's offer of service on behalf of himself and his followers.

This proclamation was addressed to the people of Louisiana; and, after summoning them to take energetic measures for defence against Great Britain, it went on to say:

"I ask you, Louisianians, can we place any confidence in the honor of men who have courted an alliance with pirates and robbers? Have not these noble Britons — these honorable men, Colonel Nicholls and Captain W. H. Percy, the true representatives of their royal master — done this? Have they not made offers to the pirates of Barataria to join them and their holy cause? And have they not dared to insult you by calling upon you to associate, as brothers, with them and these hellish banditti? Confident that any attempt to invade our soil will be repelled, the undersigned calls not upon either pirates or robbers to join him in the glorious cause."

It cannot be said that this merciless arraignment of himself and his men produced any particular effect upon Lafitte's mind beyond assuring him that Jackson, unlike the governor's conferees, believed that the English had sought the aid of the Baratarians.

This, of itself, would prove a strong point in his favor, and place him upon a firmer footing, when he should re-

new the proposition to Jackson himself. And knowing, as he did through his agents, of the comparatively defenceless condition of New Orleans, and of the disaffection existing amongst a large portion of its citizens, he felt that his offer might meet with more desirable results than had attended the former one.

Between eight and nine o'clock of an evening toward the middle of December, Jackson and Governor Claiborne were seated in the library of the latter's residence, engaged in an earnest discussion of some of the many perplexing questions with which they were confronted.

Jackson, now in his forty-eighth year, was not only one of the most notable and picturesque figures of the south and southwest, but his strong personality had already impressed itself upon the country at large.

His adventurous life had enveloped him in an atmosphere of romance; his rugged integrity and stern sense of justice had won the respect of enemies, even as the simplicity and loveliness of his character, together with his homely, democratic ways, retained the affection of friends, while his personal intrepidity and acceptance of the "*Code d'Honneur*" appealed powerfully to the more impulsive element of the nation.

A lawyer by profession, he had been Public Prosecutor, and Judge of the Supreme Court of Tennessee; he had also been a Representative and Senator in Congress from this, his adopted State. When, in June, 1812, war was declared against Great Britain, he had already, in anticipation of the event, raised a brigade of three thousand Tennesseans, who were among the first volunteers offered to the government.

He served with credit, although without any special opportunity for distinction, until the winter of 1813-4, when he avenged the massacre of Fort Mims by inflicting upon the Creek Indians a series of disasters which destroyed them as a nation.

This had brought him into national prominence; and in

May, 1814, he was appointed major-general in the regular army of the United States, succeeding William Henry Harrison, who was destined to occupy the presidential chair four years after it had been vacated by Jackson.

Near the table, and facing the fire, sat the tall, sinewy figure, clad in the blue and buff uniform already well known to the people of New Orleans.

Under a broad, high forehead, from which the wiry hair, touched slightly with gray, was pushed back as if by impatient fingers, the deeply-set eyes, stern in their usual expression, emphasized the iron will expressed by the firm, lean jaw and thin lips, — the latter, with their down-turning corners, looking as if made only for uttering words of command or of biting sarcasm.

Claiborne was eight years younger — only forty, and of a different mould. He, like Jackson, had gone in early life to Tennessee, had been a Judge, and Representative in Congress. But his experience was far less strenuous; and having been appointed Governor of Mississippi in 1801, and of Louisiana in 1803, his life had been comparatively free from the struggles and vicissitudes which had marked Jackson's career.

He was more of a courtier and diplomat than was the other man; and, as he sat, dressed in the height of fashion, leaning back in his chair, one shapely hand resting upon the table, and the other occasionally stroking his smooth chin, he scarcely looked like one capable of coping successfully with the unruly elements which threatened to dominate the existing crisis.

But he was a man of courage and resource, of sterling sense and intense patriotism. His task had been a difficult and perilous one; his necessities had been great, and his means of little value. He had, however, by coolness and strategy, kept the disloyal and malcontent spirit from manifesting itself in dangerous demonstrations, while at the same time doing his uttermost to strengthen the city's material defences.

"We are too weak, by far, I tell you, Claiborne," General Jackson was now saying with irascible emphasis, "and without anything like a sufficient force to meet what is now at our very doors. I feel—to be frank with you—some doubt of our ability to sustain the present enthusiasm of these people who were talking so lately of capitulating to damned Britishers."

"Capitulating!" echoed the governor. "Surely, general, at this late day, and in the face of the pledges they have made, neither the legislature nor the citizens would return to any such idea."

"I am not so sure of that, if they were forced, as are you and I, to realize that the enemy outnumbers us ten or more to one," growled Jackson. "Only"—bringing his fist down upon the table with a force that rattled the lamps and papers—"if I catch them talking of such a thing, I'll blow them and their crazy old Capitol to the skies."

Before the governor—whose back was to the door—could reply to this outburst, he became aware that a third person had entered the room; and he glanced over his shoulder to see who it might be, while his face showed the irritation he felt at any one presuming to interrupt him at such a time.

But his expression changed to one of mingled anger and consternation; and Jackson, who had been sternly regarding the intruder, started to his feet.

The new-comer had closed and locked the door, and tossed his long cloak upon a chair. This done, he removed his hat, and let the light fall plainly upon a handsome, regular-featured face, the swartness of whose lower part was several shades deeper than that of the forehead.

After bowing respectfully, he stood silent, while his black eyes searched with curious intentness the stern face of General Jackson, whose right hand had stolen into the breast of his coat.

The governor, who had risen when he saw the key turned in the door, now made a step or two toward the

chair where lay his sword; but the stranger, picking up the weapon before Claiborne could reach it, presented it to the latter with a graceful bow, coupled with a courteous "Permit me, sir."

Then, turning quickly to Jackson, he added, extending both arms to their full length, either side of him, "Surely General Jackson will not fire upon an unarmed man!" And he advanced to the table.

Governor Claiborne's face had reddened angrily as he took his sword from the stranger's hands and replaced it on the chair; and Jackson's expression changed somewhat, as, with "Assuredly not, sir," he withdrew his hand from the pistol.

"I beg, gentlemen, that you will pardon my intrusion," said their unknown visitor, "until you shall hear the object of my mission. And I pray you to believe that I come here for no other reason than a desire to be of use to you, and to the country both of you serve."

Jackson, after, with an impatient hand, whirling his chair around to face the speaker, resumed his seat; but the governor, still standing, demanded hotly to know how it was that he had entered unannounced.

"Do not blame your people, governor, for they are not at fault. My errand made it necessary that I should reach you and General Jackson unobserved; and I improved the opportunity to enter while the sentry was not looking."

He did not think it necessary to explain that the sentry, a former Baratarian, had taken care to look in an opposite direction.

"May we know your name, sir?" inquired Claiborne, stiffly, and with a haughtiness of manner in which there was no sign of softening.

"I am the man whom your excellency has been pleased to proclaim an outlaw, and for whose capture you have offered a reward of five hundred dollars; the man" — now fixing his piercing eyes upon Jackson's face — "whom,

with his followers, you, sir, have branded as 'hellish banditti,' and as the 'pirates of Barataria.' I am Jean Lafitte."

Jackson straightened himself, and again his hand moved toward his breast; but he checked it, while muttering something below his breath. And the governor's eyes turned in the direction of his sword; but he made no attempt to regain it.

"Gentlemen, I pledge you my word," added Lafitte, a touch of bitter irony now tinging his voice, "that I seek you with no weapons, and that my sole means of defence consist in what I have to say, together with the papers I bring for your consideration."

"You are a bold man, Captain Lafitte, to venture into New Orleans, to say nothing of presenting yourself here," was the governor's unconciliatory response.

Lafitte bowed, as if acknowledging a compliment, and drawing a package from his breast, held it across the table toward General Jackson, who was still staring at him, as if in wonder at his youth and appearance.

"I ask, general," he said, "that you, and you, also, Governor Claiborne, will accord me the honor to read the original documents I received some time ago from your enemies, and in respect to which I understand my statement was condemned as false. I have come to ask this of you, and to renew, in person, the offer made through my agents, whom, by the way, you, Governor Claiborne, imprisoned as malefactors."

Claiborne flushed, but did not reply; and Jackson, taking the package, made a motion as if to open it. Then, instead of doing so, he laid it on the table, and again looked searchingly into the face whose dark eyes met, with unflinching frankness, the speculative regard of his own.

"Be seated, Captain Lafitte," said Governor Claiborne, with rather reluctant courtesy.

The former bowed slightly in recognition of the invitation, but remained standing as he continued, with

increased emphasis, "The statements I made were true, and my former offer was submitted in perfect good faith, inspired by an earnest desire to fulfil my duty to the country in which I have made my home, and whose laws I have never been found guilty of transgressing. All I asked in return was that the names of myself and my followers should be freed from the obloquy which has unjustly become attached to them."

Lafitte's words and manner were full of stern dignity, and Claiborne made neither reply nor comment. But his face flushed again, and he declined to meet the significant look the speaker bent upon him.

Jackson, however, accepted the implied challenge.

"Have you never been accused of smuggling, and slave-trading, Captain Lafitte, and of being a privateer?" he asked, in a tone of dry sarcasm.

"Accused, yes; but never convicted," was the quick reply, "although all my dealings have been within the knowledge of the authorities, and I was constantly in and about New Orleans. I was once, as Governor Claiborne will tell you, indicted; but I was tried before an impartial judge, and acquitted by a jury composed of the foremost citizens of the State."

Jackson's face expressed surprise, and he glanced inquiringly at Claiborne, who nodded, as if in affirmation of the statement. Then the former, again turning his stern eyes upon Lafitte, asked, "How is it with you in regard to privateering?"

"Let me ask how is it with *you*, General Jackson, and with your own country, in regard to privateering?" And a curl of scorn touched Lafitte's lips. "Tell me, I pray you, sir, how many scores of vessels, flying the flag of the United States, are, at this moment, preying upon foreign commerce?"

"But only upon the commerce of Great Britain, with whom we are at war," declared Jackson, his grim features relaxed — but only for an instant — by a satisfied smile;

"and they are acting under regular letters of marque and reprisal."

"True; and the vessels in which I have been interested acted under letters of marque from the Republic of Carthage, and sailed under the flag of that nation. Never, since I controlled them, have they interfered with the ships of any nation excepting Spain, with whom, as you are aware, the Republic of Carthage is at war."

Jackson was silent, and glanced scowlingly at Claiborne, who was tapping the table abstractedly, and appeared absorbed by his own reflections.

"I thank you, general," Lafitte resumed, speaking with less emphasis, "for the opportunity you have given me to explain these matters. And, without going into them farther, I wish to assure you once more that my former offer was made from legitimate and patriotic motives."

Jackson bowed, as if in acquiescence.

"But," demanded Lafitte, a sudden rush of indignation sounding in his voice, "how was it received? My motives were impugned,—my statements branded as false; my messengers were imprisoned. And, as a fitting sequence to this, an armed expedition was sent to Baratania; my men were butchered, or taken prisoners; my vessels seized, and my other property destroyed. In addition to this, and harder than all else, my foster-brother, after being mortally wounded, was brought to New Orleans, thrown into the common gaol, and left there, to die."

Again Jackson looked at Claiborne, as if expecting some reply. But the governor seemed somewhat discomposed, and, as if to divert the course of Lafitte's words, asked with an air of surprise, "Your foster-brother? Was not Pierre Lafitte your own brother, as was always supposed?"

"No, sir. There was no tie of blood between us; but we had been bound, since our boyhood in France, by a bond far stronger than that of blood—by mutual affection and confidence."

The fire had died out of the speaker's eyes, and his voice

was attuned to the gravity of his words. But this was only for the moment; and, with an impatient toss of his head, as if to throw off the mood which had fallen upon him, he continued in a tone, which, low as it was, vibrated with intense passion, "This brother of mine, who was one with me in my former offer, and who was prepared to do his part toward making it successful, — he was murdered by those men whom he was trying to assist; and his dying request to me was that I should do as I am doing to-night — see General Jackson, and urge his acceptance of our proposition."

Lafitte had been standing all this time. But now, as he finished speaking, he seated himself and folded his arms, while his face took an expression of stoical indifference contrasting sharply with the impassioned words that had just poured from his lips.

Jackson and Claiborne looked at one another, as if each were waiting for the other to speak, until the former, while he fingered the package he had taken from the table, said in a tone whose gravity held something akin to tenderness, "Captain Lafitte, you understand, of course, that I, an officer of the army, cannot criticise in your presence anything that took place prior to my assuming command here. But, speaking as a man, and as one who has had his own share of hardship and sorrow, I may venture to extend to you my regret and sympathy for the trouble and bereavement that seem to have been yours."

Lafitte bent his head silently, and the governor was about to speak, when Jackson added, "Let me say furthermore, that, as a lover of my country, I can appreciate fully the motives which induced your original offer, and your present renewal of it."

"I thank you, sir."

Claiborne, who had been fidgeting impatiently, now hastened to say, "You will do me the justice, Captain Lafitte, to believe that I wished to accept your offer. But my personal views were overruled by those upon whose

judgment I relied; and the expedition to Barataria was sent at their instigation — not mine."

"And yet," said Lafitte, with dry sarcasm that brought a faint smile to Jackson's firm lips, "you are the Governor of Louisiana."

Claiborne winced; but before he could answer the thrust, Lafitte added, with a shrug of his shoulders, "But it matters not at whose instigation the outrage was committed. The facts are as I have stated, and what is past must stand. Now, General Jackson, may I ask that you open that package, and read the papers it contains?"

"I will, sir," was the reply. "But, before doing so, I take it upon myself to say to you that, no matter what may be the outcome of this affair — whether your proposition be accepted or refused, your men shall at once be released from custody; and they, as well as you, shall have safe-conducts from the city, or my protection here, should you or they prefer to remain."

He had been opening the packet, and did not look at Lafitte as the latter said, "Again I thank you, sir."

As Jackson perused the first paper, the impressions he gathered were plainly observable in his look, and half-audible comments. Now his face would be shadowed by a deep scowl, and his stiff hair would bristle still more aggressively as he ran his fingers through it. This would be followed by a derisive curling of his lips, or an impatient exclamation; and this in turn by a gesture of contempt.

"Fine bombast," he growled, before going very far. Then, a little way on, "Sophomorical rubbish! Savors of Eton, with some of George the Third's silly meanderings." And so on, until the end was reached.

Claiborne had seated himself closer to Jackson; and presently, the latter, with an exclamation of the strongest disgust, handed him the paper.

"Here, Claiborne, you have seen a copy of this; but you had better refresh your memory by reading the original."

The governor took the paper, and had begun to read it,

when, chancing to glance at Lafitte, he was puzzled by the expression of the latter's face.

He was leaning back in his chair, his lips half-parted, and his face softened by a glow seeming to come from an inward light, as his eyes rested upon something hanging against the wall, back of the governor.

It was an engraving of Napoleon, one that, as the governor knew, was brought from Barataria by a soldier from whom he — an ardent admirer of the emperor — had rescued it.

The thought of this made him — in the new light thrown by Lafitte's accusations with reference to the attack upon Barataria — feel uncomfortable; for, should Lafitte recognize the picture as his own property, its present possessor would be placed in an unenviable position.

He had forced his eyes back to the paper, whose contents he recalled quite accurately. But now, with the impression already made upon him by Lafitte, and the latter's face — as he had just seen it — intruding itself between his eyes and the writing, he was forced to acknowledge to himself that, pirate and outlaw as he had been named, the Baratarian leader had shown the greatest generosity and patriotism, together with a personal courage which appealed strongly to his — the governor's — sense of loyalty and chivalry.

Possessed by this feeling, he glanced again at the younger man, to see him still looking in the same direction, apparently oblivious of all surroundings, while his rapt expression made the governor wonder.

Little could he have guessed the nature of the thoughts giving rise to it; and, even could he have known, his wonder would but have been increased.

Jean Lafitte's heart was in communion with that pictured face, and with its original, whom he seemed to be once more facing upon Elba, looking into the eyes that had rested so kindly upon him at the last, and hearing the voice uttering words of old-time affection.

He had missed the picture from its place over his hearth at Barataria; but, knowing there were others like it, he had no thought that he was looking upon what had been his own.

Presently, with a sigh indicating relief, Jackson handed the last paper to Claiborne, and leaning forward, with his elbows upon the arms of his chair, said, his voice showing more of contempt than anger, "Most edifying assortment of reading, to be sure, Captain Lafitte. Are these all — these four papers, two of them addressed to you, Captain Percy's instructions to his subordinates, and the proclamation to the people of this State?"

"These are all, general; and they contain all the information within my power to give you now," Lafitte replied, with a mildness contrasting with Jackson's tone and manner as would a strain of soft music after the clanging of hammers upon brass.

When Claiborne had finished reading the last paper, he and Jackson looked at each other curiously.

The former's eyes asked, "Are we to trust this man, or is this but another phase of his duplicity?"

But Jackson's declared, "Here is the opportunity to obtain the men and arms of which we are in such desperate need."

Still no word passed between them; and Claiborne began to refold the papers, while the general turned to Lafitte.

"It is a fine offer you have received — all you can possibly desire."

"A fine offer, general, as you say; yet it fails utterly to cover what I desire."

"What, — do you not desire wealth, and honor — a fine position in His Majesty's service?" demanded Jackson satirically.

"Such, for instance, as Benedict Arnold received from a like source?"

The question came quietly, but with a keen irony that brought a flash of approval from Jackson's probing eyes.

"I wish — will take, nothing that England can ever have to offer me," Lafitte added, with sudden fierceness. "I hate the nation, and its ways! Nothing could induce me to accept, now or ever, any terms from the English."

The first unguarded evidence of anything like cordial liking now manifested itself in Jackson's face. Yet there was nothing of this in his voice as he said, "May I ask, then, Captain Lafitte, if possibly some motive of personal revenge brought you here to-night with a renewal of your offer?"

Lafitte's face flushed through its swartness; then it paled, and grew stern.

"I have never heard, sir, that General Jackson was lacking in generosity. I am, in coming here, actuated solely by what I consider the most honorable course; for, strange as it may seem to you, I still claim to know what honor is, or should be. I love Louisiana as I hate Great Britain."

He had risen, and was looking down, his eyes flashing, and his nostrils dilated, upon the two seated hearers.

"I understood that you needed soldiers — most of all, artillerymen; that you also needed arms — cannon and muskets. I came to proffer all I have left of men and resources, for your use, and that of Louisiana. I ask no pay for myself — only for my men, if you will; if not, then I will try to take care of that, and they are yours without pay. The one thing I demand is what I have stated already — a full pardon for my men and myself — a pardon for all offences or alleged offences against the laws of this State or of the United States."

The effect of these words upon Jackson appeared in his face, as he nodded significantly to Claiborne. But the latter, cautious as ever, said, with incisive calmness, "These papers, Captain Lafitte, are of great importance, and seem to bear the stamp of genuineness. I do not wish to offend your feelings, sir; but you must surely understand my position as Governor of Louisiana. I therefore

ask you this: What authority have I, aside from your own statement, for assuming them to be authentic?"

"None, Governor Claiborne, at this moment," replied Lafitte, his face showing the anger which, although held partially in check, made his low tone ominously vibrant. "But, until you can ascertain from what you may consider a more reliable source the truth of my statements, you are welcome to hold me as your prisoner."

"And, Claiborne, if you do," thundered Jackson, at last giving rein to his true feelings, and pounding the table emphatically, "if you presume to do such a thing, by the Eternal, I'll release him in five minutes! You must remember that the city of New Orleans is under martial law."

The governor, with a smile, waved his hand, as if to brush aside the idea of such a contingency, and turning again to Lafitte, said with the same deliberation as before, "There is one more question my duty requires me to ask."

The dark eyes, still brilliant with anger, looked at him inquiringly; and Jackson's long fingers beat an impatient tattoo upon the arm of his chair as he watched the two men standing near him, the governor's head reaching but slightly above the shoulders of the younger man.

"Assuming," Claiborne continued, "that everything is as you say, and that your proposition is accepted, what security have I, as governor of this State, and responsible, not only to its people, but to the President, that you will fulfil your agreement?"

Jackson, with an impatient glance at Claiborne, started to speak; but he checked himself as Lafitte, standing still more erect, answered coldly, "My personal manhood and honor. Ask any merchant of New Orleans with whom I have had dealings if ever I failed to fulfil my contracts. Ask any bank in New Orleans if my paper has ever been dishonored. No man, woman or child, white or black, who knows my name, but will tell you that I always keep my promises."

"Well answered!" And Jackson, every vestige of reserve now swept away, rose from his chair, and coming around the table, extended both hands, which Lafitte grasped cordially.

Claiborne's manner underwent a marked change, although it was still somewhat formal as he said, "Captain Lafitte, I cannot do otherwise than believe you to be sincere, and to admire the motives which have led you to take this most honorable course. I am pleased to be able to recognize in you a good and loyal citizen; and my proclamation against you will be revoked in the morning. Meanwhile, in token of amity between us, here is my hand, sir."

Lafitte, after a momentary hesitation, took the extended hand, and bent his head with a courtesy cold as that which had marked Claiborne's former manner.

Jackson evidently determined not to accept the governor's attitude as a criterion for his own, said, with increased friendliness: "Captain Lafitte, I shall commend you to the President, by the very next post, and furnish him with a full statement of this matter. But" — glancing at the clock on the mantel opposite him — "it is late, and I must return to headquarters. I shall look for you to report to me at nine in the morning, to talk over matters in detail. I must know precisely as to the amount of assistance I am to count upon from you; and there are other things about which I wish to consult you. I understand that no man is so familiar as yourself with the country to the south and southwest of here. Is this true?"

"Yes, general, as I think I may say without egotism."

"So I supposed; and I shall have some questions to ask of you in regard to it. My knowledge of the country is not entirely complete, and I wish to obtain all possible information respecting the roads and waterways."

"I shall be happy to serve you, sir, to the best of my ability; and I thank you, gentlemen — both of you, for the favor you have shown me."

The sudden huskiness of Lafitte's firm voice was the only indication of his pent-up feelings, as he added, "To-night, General Jackson, I thank you in words; but I hope to soon manifest gratitude in a more substantial form — one that shall cause you no regret of the justice you have shown to Jean Lafitte of Barataria."

He left them — his departure being as rapid and quiet as had been his appearance; and Jackson, turning to Claiborne, said, with a smile of grim satisfaction, "I believe that we can save New Orleans; and if we do, by the Eternal, a good share of the credit will belong to the men whom I called 'pirates and robbers,' and approved of your hanging!"

"He seems in no way," remarked the governor irrelevantly, while he stroked his chin in a contemplative fashion, "the sort of man I had been led to suppose." And, rising, his excellency accompanied General Jackson to the street door.

Lafitte had, with head erect and heart buoyant, gone out into the starlit night, feeling, and with good reason, that his wishes, hopes, prayers, were about to be answered.

He had now, at the age of thirty-four, and after a career the like of which had come to but few men, won the respect of the foremost man of either continent.

Now for one final stand, even though this must be in the face of battle and bloodshed; and then, if life were left him, adieu forever to the name with which his career had been linked.

Adieu to Louisiana, and back again to France, and his rightful name, — back to him who had made all this possible.

CHAPTER FIFTY-FOUR

THE December sunshine lying about La Tête des Eaux gave a warmth and brightness that would have made the season of the year scarcely to be realized by one born to New England's ice and snow; and the cold breeze stirring among the trees would have been but the frosty breath of early fall, turned by the sunrise to dews that drenched the grass and few fallen leaves.

General La Roche was hurrying through breakfast, while his saddled horse, in charge of a mounted negro, pawed impatiently as he stood waiting for his master.

La Roche had returned home only the day before, for a brief visit, and to assure himself that all was well with his household, consisting now of his sister, Lazalie, and Rose de Cazeneuve.

Even at this, the last hour of his stay, some of the items of news he had brought from the city were being discussed and enlarged upon.

The water-courses leading from the gulf were being watched most vigilantly, as it was from this quarter that an attack was likely to come; and a body of men had been recently stationed by Jackson in the neighborhood of Bayou Bienvenue, in deference — so it was reported — to the opinion of Lafitte.

Besides six gunboats on Lake Borgne, watching the water-passes, there was on shore a large force of men, with no less a commander than Dominique-You; and many of his own followers were to be found amongst the soldiers under him. Others of the Baratarians were with Beluche, at Bayou St. John; and the former "outlaws" were also

mingled with the soldiers at Forts St. Philip and Petites Coquilles.

The outlook in the city was much as it had been since Jackson's latest victory—that of drawing to his support the erstwhile malcontents, and those who were lukewarm; and any one who now whispered of capitulation would have been risking his life.

“A curious change of affairs,” remarked Madame Riefêt, to whom her brother had been narrating all these particulars, “that General Jackson should now be trusting so much to the Baratarians, who, only last September, were denounced by him, as well as by every one else.”

She was preparing her brother's second cup of coffee, and now placed it on Albert's extended tray.

The general laughed as he took the cup.

“Well—yes. In September they were ‘pirates,’ and ‘hellish banditti;’ but in December they are privateers, and their leaders are gentlemen. Yet I can assure you that they are brave fellows and tremendous fighters, and just the men needed now to help save New Orleans.”

He happened to glance down the table, and wondered a little at the expression his words seemed to have kindled in the glowing face of Rose de Cazeneuve, who asked, “And Captain Jean is on Jackson's staff?”

“Not exactly that, Mignonne, although he might as well be, for he appears to be one of the general's most trusted officers, and is here, there, and everywhere. He has been several times in this neighborhood, although none of you have known it. You see he has no time for social calls—scarcely any for eating and sleeping.”

“That reminds me to tell you, general,” Lazalie said, her tone and air showing considerable indignation, “that three days ago, when I was rowing, with Nebo, and not half way up the bayou toward Lake Borgne, two men—and they were Baratarians, I am sure—came out of the woods and hailed me from the bank, warning me to go no farther. They had guns, and Nebo was frightened.

They asked where we came from, and where we were going, questioning us as if we were British spies. I would not answer, but let Nebo row back, as he begged me to do, and they called after us, saying that we must not come that way again."

"Oh, my dear, and you never told me a word of this!" exclaimed Madame Riefêt, pausing in her task of daintily wiping, with her napkin, the fluffy lace of her undersleeve, which had barely grazed her plate.

Lazalie, putting a purple grape between her scornful lips, glanced sidewise, but offered no excuse for silence in regard to the matter which had so evidently roused her ire.

She had recently developed a fancy for rowing, a pastime in which Mademoiselle de Cazeneuve joined occasionally, and one that Madame Riefêt permitted with outspoken reluctance.

The two girls had formerly ridden a good deal; but this had been stopped by General La Roche, owing to his knowledge that the country near his plantation was filled with soldiers.

It was then that Lazalie had taken to exercising upon the water; for, to a girl of her restless nature, quietude was an impossibility.

"I can readily imagine," said General La Roche, referring to what she had related, "that these men might have been lacking in the courtesy to which you are accustomed; but their rough exteriors covered the best of intentions. Pray do not row that way again," he added earnestly.

Lazalie looked mutinous, and wilfully ignored his unconcealed anxiety.

"You will not?" he urged.

"But why not?" she demanded petulantly.

"Well," he began, with some hesitancy, "Captain Jean, as I have told my sister, seems to think that the British will soon appear in this neighborhood; and I am half inclined to agree with him."

Madame Riefêt uttered a faint scream.

"But you told me that only Captain Jean thought this! Why should he know more about it than General Jackson, or any one else? Oh, dear! If they should come, we would be right in their path!"

"You would probably be as safe here as at New Orleans, Louise," declared her brother, consolingly, "but it is difficult to believe that they will attempt a descent upon the city from this quarter. They surely will not be such fools as to risk having their vessels stuck in the mud of the bayous."

"But oh, dear — oh, dear, Philip!" exclaimed Madame Riefêt, not much comforted, "I hope they will not come this way."

"So do I, sister mine; and so does every one. We expect them to come straight up the river, so that we can blow them, as Jackson says, to — a certain place he mentioned."

She looked at him reprovingly, but Lazalie showed her white teeth in an appreciative smile.

As for Mademoiselle de Cazeneuve, her thoughts appeared to be straying, for with an abstracted air she was crumbling the muffin on her plate.

But her eyes became riveted upon the general's face when, while folding his napkin, he said animatedly, "How could I have forgotten to tell you a most surprising piece of news about Captain Jean? That young man is a puzzle to me."

"What now?" asked Lazalie with marked interest, as La Roche pushed back his chair and looked at his watch.

"Oh, never mind the time, Philip," added his sister impatiently. "The city will not vanish if you should stop here an hour or two longer."

"Perhaps so, my dear — perhaps so. But I have an engagement to meet, and do not care to hurry my horse over the miles between here and the place where I must be by early afternoon."

"But, General La Roche, what is it you were about to tell us of Captain Jean?" asked Mademoiselle de Cazeneuve, whose eyes had not left the general's face, and whose cheeks were flushing with additional color.

"Just this," answered La Roche, smiling at her, and then glancing at the others in a way to show that he was about to startle them: "It appears that Captain Jean has the honor of a personal acquaintance with Napoleon."

"What!" chorused the three amazed hearers; and Madame Riefêt murmured, in an awe-stricken tone, "Captain Jean knows the French emperor!"

La Roche nodded.

"But he is emperor no longer, my dear, nor was he such when Lafitte knew him."

"But how can such a thing be possible?" Lazalie began when Madame Riefêt, having recovered herself, interrupted with: "Tell us all about it, Philip. How could he know Napoleon, and where did you hear such an improbable story?"

"From himself," was the laconic reply, accompanied by a look of great satisfaction.

The general was filled with exultation at his ability to give his sister — who had frequently expressed her dislike of his intimacy with Lafitte — a piece of information which he was quite aware would, with her — a worshipper of the illustrious Corsican — place the Baratarian leader in a position second only to him whose acquaintance he could claim.

"I cannot credit such a thing," she declared.

"You could, and you would, had you been where I was, to hear what he said to General Jackson. It came about in this way: A week or ten days ago, Lafitte rendered an important service, of a private nature, to Claiborne, and the governor urged him to name something as a reward for his services. What Lafitte asked was a picture of Napoleon, which it seems was his own property, although he was not aware of it at the time. It had been looted by

one of our men during that September attack on Baratavia, and Claiborne had rescued it, being about as mad over Napoleon as you, yourself, sister mine; and Lafitte had seen it hanging on the wall of the governor's study.

"The other day, at headquarters, I was present when Jackson and Lafitte were having a conference, during which the general spoke of the matter, and rallied Lafitte upon the sentimental price he had named for so valuable a service; he added that probably, like all Frenchmen, he made 'a sort of male Madonna out of Napoleon.'

"I wish you could have seen Lafitte's face when he answered, 'I revere him as the man I have known and loved since I was a young boy, and who has been as truly my guardian angel as ever a good Catholic could pray the Holy Mother to be.' And I wish you could have seen Jackson's face as he heard this."

Madame Riefèt gasped, and the two girls exclaimed in amazement.

"It was in France, then, that Captain Jean knew him?" Madame said wonderingly.

"Naturally, Louise, as Napoleon has never been in this country." The general now consulted his watch, and added, "I must be off; and, by the way, let none of you mention the surprising fact that I have just related, as it might not be pleasing to Captain Jean. He said no more than I have repeated, and was unmistakably averse to enlarging upon the subject."

"He always seems averse to talking of himself, or of his past life," Lazalie said, as if thinking aloud, while they rose from the table; and Madame Riefèt remarked rather severely that it was perhaps because there was some disgrace connected with his past, and that this it might be which had made him leave France.

The look of resentful indignation which this uncharitable comment brought to Mademoiselle de Cazeneuve's face was softened somewhat when the general, laying a hand on either of his sister's plump shoulders, said, as he kissed

her cheek, "For one so naturally kind of heart as you are, Louise, it is curious what wrongful things you occasionally think in regard to other people."

After he was in the saddle, and the ladies were standing on the veranda to see him depart, he warned Lazalie that, for the present at least, she should confine her aquatic excursions to the immediate vicinity of the plantation. Then, observing the perturbed expression his words had brought to Madame Riefêt's face, he added that they were not to worry about the English, as the latter were not at all likely to appear in the neighborhood of Lake Borgne.

CHAPTER FIFTY-FIVE

LESS than a week later, one early afternoon, the members of the household at La Tête des Eaux were startled by the booming of cannon in the direction of Lake Borgne.

The sound, although faint, was alarmingly suggestive, when coupled with Lafitte's prediction, imparted by General La Roche on the morning of his departure from the plantation. Madame Riefêt, with the two girls, stood for a time out of doors, listening to the unmistakable roar of battle, jarring the air with sullen reverberations. Then, half-frantic with alarm, the former began fluttering wildly about, while, with characteristic *hystérique*, she gave evidence of her emotions.

Her younger and calmer companions said little. The color was somewhat paled in Mademoiselle de Cazeneuve's cheeks, and her eyes widened with manifest apprehension; but Lazalie evinced no sign of fear, and gave scarcely any indication of unusual excitement.

There were but few of the male slaves left upon the plantation, as all the available ones had been taken by their master to New Orleans, to do their share in its defence; and those left at La Tête des Eaux, helpless as frightened children, came flocking from their quarters to gather about the "big house," chattering among themselves, or begging their no less distracted mistress to save them.

"Go hide in the woods; hide in the woods, all of you!" she screamed; and, after summoning her maid, she fled toward the house.

"What are you going to do, Madame Riefêt?" Rose de Cazeneuve asked, as the lady flew past, with her maid, a quadroon girl, following weeping in her wake.

"Pack up what I must try and save from those miserable English, who, no doubt, are coming this way; and you and Lazalie had better come with me and do the same. Then we can hide in the woods, along with the slaves, for I see no other place for us to go."

She spoke hysterically, with a plenitude of tears, and fairly flying up the veranda steps, disappeared within the house.

What had happened was this: An English fleet, with twelve hundred men, had, with the intention of throwing an attacking force across Lakes Borgne and Pontchartrain, sailed into Lake Borgne and opened an attack upon the Americans, whose presence was a surprise to the enemy, as Captain Lockyer, commanding the latter, had understood that this point was defenceless.

A fierce battle followed, resulting in a partial victory for the English; and this had been won in the face of difficulties either unforeseen, or imperfectly understood.

Owing to the shallowness of the water, the larger ships could go no farther than the entrance to Lake Borgne; and it had taken three days to transfer to smaller vessels the troops and supplies needed for immediate use. This had been a severe task; and some of the smaller vessels had afterward grounded in the mud, which General La Roche, like others, had counted upon as a means of discouraging an attack from this quarter.

But the work had been accomplished, and the British were now masters of Lake Borgne.

It was Shapira who, late in the afternoon, brought this news to La Tête des Eaux; and from him the ladies learned, for the first time, of how Lafitte, who had been anticipating such a contingency, endeavored, some time before, to prepare for them a safe refuge, in case his apprehensions should be realized.

Unknown to them, or even to General La Roche, Shapira had, for many weeks, been enacting the part of guardian over the general's household, this position having been assigned to him by Lafitte, with detailed instructions as to his movements.

The house was soon in a bustle of preparation, the inmates packing hastily the few things they were to take with them in their flight, and concealing such property as would be likely to attract thieving hands among the enemy, who would, with little doubt, visit the plantation, as Shapira reported the woods about Lake Borgne to be filled with British soldiers.

He had taken the precaution to post several slaves in the woods, with strict orders to give immediate warning in case a single red coat should be seen approaching the plantation. He did not mention the fact that he himself had, at an early hour that morning, seen two of them not three miles from La Tête des Eaux. Indeed he said nothing which might cause unnecessary alarm; but, with restless eyes watching in every direction from which danger might come, he assisted in the preparations for flight, submitting with exemplary patience to Madame Riefêt's erratic orders, and encouraging the other women by word and act.

Madame Riefêt, when not absorbed by other matters, did not hesitate to express her reluctance toward accepting the assistance of this swarthy, brigandish-looking man, whom she had never before seen, and whose very existence had been unknown to her.

"He may be leading us to even worse things," she declared helplessly, pausing in her flight from one place to another, while giving impracticable instructions to Ma'am Brigida, Barbê, and Violet, her own maid.

"Oh, dear Madame Riefêt," Lazalie protested, "surely this man is trustworthy, or Captain Jean would never have sent him to us."

"He *says* that Captain Jean sent him; but how are we

to know? Such a strange, fierce-looking man as he is! He looks capable of luring us away, only to rob us himself."

"I know something of him," spoke up Mademoiselle Rose. "He is the man of whom grandpère rented Kanauhana. Did n't you know it?"

"Yes," Lazalie added, before Madame Riefêt had time to frame a fitting reply, "and we have seen him many times about the woods here. Rose and I once saw Captain Jean talking with him; and I think he is very obliging."

"But all this he tells us of a cave, where we can hide, right here on the plantation, yet which no one has ever heard of before, and no one, excepting Captain Jean and himself, seems to know anything about, sounds very strange and incredible. Did your grandpère know of this cave, Mignonne?"

"I do not know, but I think not. I never heard of such a thing. Yet, madame, it surely is safer to trust this man, who tells us that Captain Jean sent him, than to stay here and risk a visit from those dreadful soldiers." Mademoiselle de Cazeneuve shuddered, and looked out of the window, as if fearing to see those she had named.

"We dare not stay, and so we must trust him," said Madame, with a weak attempt at resolution, as she slid a jewel-box into the bundle Violet was preparing to fasten.

Old Zeney had come over from Kanauhana, having insisted upon being taken away with her beloved young mistress; and she now entered the room to announce that Captain Jean was below stairs.

Never had his arrival at the plantation been so welcome as now. Madame Riefêt, catching up her out-of-door wraps from the bed, ordered that the various bundles be brought downstairs; for the phlegmatic Barbê had finished tying up the last one as Chloe handed Señorita Lazalie the lace scarf for her head, while Ma'am Brigida was fastening the long cloak she had insisted that her nursling should wear.

Zeney hastened to help her mistress with her wraps, while the girl was listening to the voice now urging Madame Riefêt to hasten. It seemed very near, for Lafitte in his anxiety had come part way up the staircase; and the sound brought all the wonted color back to Rose de Cazeneuve's cheeks.

"Heavens! How fortunate, and what a comfort, to have such a man come to our assistance!" said Lazalie, as she and Rose followed Madame Riefêt so closely from the room that one of them trod upon the long train of the elder lady's rich gown, which was plucked hastily out of the way as its wearer exclaimed testily, "Finely arrayed we are, to go trailing through bushes and briars, and exploring underground places! Oh, dear—if only I had thought to wear a more suitable dress!"

"You may feel yourself fortunate, Madame Riefêt, that you are able to leave here by daylight, and not, like some people I know, be roused from sleep to find yourself a prisoner in English hands," said Lafitte, as they joined him on the stairway.

He had, while speaking, lifted his hat; and as he glanced from one to another of the three faces near him, his eyes rested for an extra second upon the one always uppermost in his thoughts.

As they were descending the stairs, he called to Shapira, who was standing on the veranda, and then hurrying down, gave the latter some instructions which the others did not hear as they passed out of the house and faced the slaves, now huddled into a terrified mass, with their faces full of despairing expectancy.

Some of the women began lamenting wildly when they found that they were not to go away. But Lafitte, in his usual authoritative fashion, quieted the hubbub, and ordered Shapira to take them to the Colonneh, which—as he now decided—was not to be used as a hiding-place for those whom he himself had, so unexpectedly, been able to assist.

One of his own craft, commanded by Baptistine, was lying off the Owl's Point, awaiting the signal which would announce the coming of Lafitte, who, bent upon a private mission in the neighborhood, had not reckoned upon the present denouement.

But now, in view of all the circumstances, he considered this, the boat, a more desirable means for conveying the ladies directly to Shell Island, where now were only old Scipio, Juniper, and the boy, Nato.

Waiting therefore until he saw Shapira start for the Colonneh, followed by the now quiet slaves, Lafitte, who had meantime explained his plan to his own charges, told them to follow him, and set out hurriedly in an opposite direction from that taken by Shapira and his dusky retinue.

CHAPTER FIFTY-SIX

THE forest was darkening with late afternoon shadows as the fleeing party followed, in comparative silence, the tall form that led them.

Lafitte moved rapidly, with noiseless footfalls, turning now and again to say some word that might give courage to the others, or pausing to hold aside a branch that drooped too low over their pathway, which, but for his leadership, would have been but a trackless labyrinth of trees and tangled thicket.

Madame Riefêt, in her bewilderment at the surroundings, and with increasing conviction that every step was taking them farther from the dreaded English, forgot to ask any questions in regard to Shell Island, — forgot even to inquire into the matter of the cave, so near her brother's door, and yet unknown to him or his people.

Lazalie's early training now stood her in good stead, enabling her to accept everything with a philosophical calm that would not have been possible had her former life been like that of the past few years.

And Rose de Cazeneuve had not lived among the Indians without being imbued with something of their calmness and stoicism in the face of danger.

To this was added her implicit faith in him who moved so steadily before her, with erect head and lithe limbs, — whose eyes and ears, as she well knew, were keenly alert for her safety.

At length the party emerged from the deeper shadows of their wooded way, and came into a cleared space, where the knoll known as "The Owl's Point" projected into the bayou; and halting here, Lafitte looked about him, while

the others stood grouped a little distance away, awaiting quietly his movements.

But before he could give the signal to Baptistine, whose craft was concealed around the bend of the bayou, two men burst from the cover of a thicket opposite Lafitte, a gun was levelled at his breast, and a hoarse voice shouted, "Surrender, you cursed pirate!"

Rose de Cazeneuve, with a wild cry, rushed between the weapon and Lafitte, while Barbê, who had been staring — as though he were a ghost — at the holder of the gun, echoed the shriek of her mistress.

"Do not — do not shoot your child!" she screamed; and, at her words, old Zeney, who stood nearest the stranger, gave him one searching look, and rushed in turn between her mistress and the gun, just as it shot out a jet of flame.

A second report mingled so closely with the first as to make them seem but one; and Zeney, with the man who had shot her, fell to the ground.

All had happened so quickly that Lafitte, who was, for an instant, unnerved by Rose de Cazeneuve's effort to save him, had scarcely time to draw a pistol before his unknown assailant fell dead, as if from the discharge of his own weapon, which had killed Zeney.

In their surprise and fright, and by reason of the confusion, no one except Lafitte had comprehended any meaning in the words which followed the wild cry of Barbê, who now stood sobbing hysterically, with her arms around her half-swooning mistress, while Lazalie, with dilating nostrils and blazing eyes, sought to release herself from Madame Riefêt. That lady, beside herself with fright, was imploring the girl to stay with her, seeming to be filled with the idea that to go nearer the spot where were Barbê and her mistress was to invite additional disaster from the dead man's companion, who stood silently beside the prostrate form.

Baptistine, who had heard the shots, reached the shore

in a small boat, pulled by some of his crew, soon after Shapira appeared at the edge of the thick woods from whence had come the bullet that had killed Zeney's slayer.

The English sailor, at Lafitte's command, now surrendered his arms to Shapira, and was promised freedom, in exchange for a truthful statement of the motive which brought his companion and himself to the spot.

He said that the other man had been unknown to him until that same morning; and all he now knew of him was that he was a scout, picked up from among the Indians, and bought to serve the English. Captain Lockyer, who was in command of the English fleet upon Lake Borgne, having learned that Lafitte was in that vicinity, had selected this scout to find and capture the man upon whom he longed to execute personal vengeance. His orders had been to bring Lafitte to him, alive, if possible, and dead, rather than not at all; and the sailor, having been one of the crew who rowed the British officers to their mortifying conference at Grande Terre, had been sent with the scout in order to identify Lafitte.

Such was the end of the man in whom Barbê had recognized the brilliant officer of former years,—recognized, despite the shock of grizzled hair, and the changes wrought by time and a lawless life in the face and form that had tempted the new year's elopement.

Meantime, Baptistine had landed; and leaving his men in the boat, he came leisurely to where Lafitte was questioning the English sailor. The Baratarian's shrewd eyes had glanced over the scene; and the fallen bodies, the group of excited women,—all that he saw, told his alert perceptions what had presumably taken place, while the sight of his commander, standing unharmed, and Shapira's attitude, as he leaned upon his gun, assured him that the danger, such as it might have been, was past.

Hence his nonchalant, strolling gait to where Lafitte stood.

The latter saw him at once, and interrupted himself to bid Shapira see that the sailor awaited his further orders. Then, drawing Baptistine aside, he gave him instructions in regard to placing the ladies and their maids aboard his boat.

Madame Riefêt, nothing loath to leave the neighborhood of the two still forms, sought to hurry the girls away.

"But it seems very dreadful to leave poor Zeney lying there," said Rose, with a tearful backward look, as Lafitte was assisting her into the small boat.

"It is not possible to do otherwise, child," he answered gently, tightening his pressure upon the small hand he was holding. "All that can be done for her now, I will see is done before I join you. Will you not trust me to do that?"

The expression of the tear-stained eyes raised to meet his look answered him without the need of speech.

"You are not coming with us?" she began, when Madame Riefêt interrupted her with a shrill — "Not coming with us! Oh, Captain Lafitte, we cannot go without you. And these strange men! Indeed" — now angrily — "we will not!"

He had put Rose aboard the boat, and turned to assist Lazalie, while he answered Madame Riefêt's outburst calmly, although there was evidence of impatience held in check.

"I intend to escort you personally to Shell Island, madame; but it is best that you all go aboard the boat my captain here has waiting around the point. He will take you to it, and then return for me, as I have a duty here which I cannot very well perform until you and the other ladies have gone. There may be other Englishmen prowling in the vicinity; and the sound of the firing may bring them this way. If this should happen, I can manage matters to far better advantage by knowing that you are out of harm's way."

Madame made no reply, but permitted him to place

her in the boat. Ma'am Brigida followed her, Violet coming last; and the sailors pushed off as Baptistine sprang aboard.

"Why does not Barbê come with us?" Madame Riefêt demanded abruptly, as she saw the French woman walk to where Shapira was bending over the body of Zeney, intending—as ordered by Lafitte—to carry it into the woods for burial.

"The boat is already loaded sufficiently, my lady," Baptistine took it upon himself to reply; and Lafitte answered from the shore, "Barbê will come with me; there is something I wish her to do, Madame Riefêt, if you will kindly permit."

Madame nodded; and Rose, from her place in the stern of the boat, gave him a look eloquent with gratitude. She understood that he wished to comfort her as much as might be, by having one of her own sex assist at the burial of the faithful Zeney.

He had, unnoticed by the others, laid a detaining hand on Barbê's arm, and whispered, "I wish to speak with you; wait here until the boat returns."

She gave no sign of having heard him, but stood silently, until, as Violet was following Brigida into the boat, she turned and walked over to where lay the dead.

CHAPTER FIFTY-SEVEN

THE amber light of sunset was tipping the tree-tops, and the gloom of coming dusk made blacker shadows gather in the hollows and recesses visible through the aisles of brown trunks.

A faint breeze stirred the gray moss festooned among the trees, swaying it, like ghostly draperies; and the oft-reiterated cry of an owl echoed eerily

Lafitte, while waiting for Baptistine to return with implements for making a grave, left Shapira to look after the prisoner, and drew Barbê aside in order to question her more closely.

He was, after hearing what she had to say, convinced that she was not mistaken in her statement, although there were no papers — nothing in the way of further identification — found upon the dead man.

Barbê acquiesced readily in Lafitte's decision that Rose de Cazeneuve should never be told the truth.

"Of what use, m'sieur, would it be to tell her?" the woman said, speaking in French, after her usual slow fashion, as he rose from beside the body he had been searching.

"No use at all," she continued, "save to make the child more unhappy. She has had no reason for loving this man, and has always been told that he died long ago, when she was but a baby."

Barbê, with a shudder, had turned and walked away, Lafitte following her as he said, "Be it understood then, that no one, except you and me, is to know the truth. I do not think the others noticed your words. But if any — if

Mademoiselle de Cazeneuve did, you must deny having spoken them, or make some plausible excuse."

She pursed her lips resolutely, and nodded.

Great was the disgust of Shapira and the two men who returned with Baptistine when they found that it was Lafitte's wish to bury the Englishman, as well as Zeney. Even Baptistine's black brows went up in a surprised disapproval which he wisely refrained from putting into words.

Quick to note this feeling, Lafitte, with a peremptory gesture, ordered the English sailor to take one of the shovels, and dig, adding as he snatched a second one from its wrathful-faced holder, "And I myself will help you, as I find I can depend upon no one to carry out my wishes."

"Nay, nay, my captain; that is what I will do for you, although it is a strange pleasure you take in burying the man who tried to kill you, and he a Britisher, at that."

Shapira, having said this, placed his gun in the hands of the nearest Baratarian, and laid hold of a shovel, when Baptistine, with a furious exclamation, — one oddly out of place upon his usually *riante* lips, — turned upon his sullen followers and demanded to know what they meant by showing such disrespect. He then gave them to understand that it was their duty to dig a grave for every Englishman in the country, if such were their leader's pleasure.

The dead were soon laid in the hastily prepared graves; the earth was shovelled over them, and some pieces of fallen trees placed above, to guard against any disturbance from denizens of the woods.

The patch of clear sky over the Owl's Point was now glorified by the afterglow of sunset, and from it the dark water of the bayou was catching a reflecting glint of crimson.

Barbê stood looking down at the sluggish stream, waiting for Lafitte, before taking her place in the boat holding the two sailors, one of whom, while lighting his cigar from the pipe of his companion, was still grumbling at his recent task.

But his comrade at length silenced him with: "Avast there, an' stow such lush, ye Portugee monkey. Our captain don't love the English divils any more than yourself. But sure it's Miles Ford that loves the captain enough to belave he has good r'asons of his own for all he may do; an' I'll not sit still an' hear ye call him names behind his back."

In the sunset-bathed clearing, Baptistine stood near Lafitte as the latter gave Shapira some parting orders. He was to take the English sailor to the neighborhood of La Tête des Eaux, and let him find his way from that point to his comrades.

In answer to Lafitte's inquiry as to how Shapira came to leave the helpless slaves to seemingly shift for themselves, the Jew had explained how his suspicions had been aroused early in the day by seeing two men, one of them in a British sailor's dress, apparently scouting in the woods. Shots — which did no harm — were exchanged between himself and the strangers, after which the latter disappeared. He had not, when at the plantation, considered it wise to mention the incident, although he took the precaution of posting some slaves on the lookout while preparations were making for flight.

Then, later on, after he had brought the slaves and goods to the Colonneh, he experienced a feeling of apprehension which impelled him to set out briskly upon the trail of Lafitte and his party.

"And, as matters turned out, it is as well that you did so," said Lafitte in a tone that was, of itself, commendation sufficient to bring a look of gratification to Shapira's dark face. "Keep the slaves and property inside the Colonneh, and, in a day or two, I will have Baptistine bring them to Shell Island. You yourself had better come with them — perhaps?" The last word was a question.

Shapira made a wry face, and pulled his coon-skin cap still farther over his forehead.

"It does not suit me, my captain, to be hiding there with the women and slaves — begging your pardon for

saying so. No,—once the niggers and goods are at Shell Island, I shall take myself and gun to New Orleans and General Jackson. Now that the Britishers have come into Lake Borgne, it is nearer the city that the music will soon be piping up.”

It was comparatively early when Lafitte's party, weary from the excitement of the day and the fatigue of their long march through the woods, betook themselves gratefully to such accommodations as Baptistine's small craft afforded for rest and sleep.

The night had closed in darkly as the boat slipped away beneath the starlight, made dimmer by the walling forest lining either bank of the bayou.

It was some time after this that Lafitte, while picking his way along the deck, a lighted lantern swinging from his hand, came upon a cloaked female figure sitting well astern upon a coil of rope, and his foot struck sharply against a small object, sending it swiftly toward her.

Holding his lantern lower to see what this might be, the rays struck across the white hand and wrist of Rose de Cazeneuve as she reached forward and picked up an exquisite ivory fan, whose jewelled sticks caught the light glimmeringly.

“Oh, it is Madame Riefêt's pet fan,—one Monsieur Laussat gave her in place of one he broke, when she danced with him at the governor's ball.”

“Laussat, Napoleon's agent, who came to negotiate the transfer of Louisiana?” asked Lafitte in a low tone, as he placed the lantern behind him and seated himself beside the girl.

The darkness, and the softly lapping water, with her nearness to him, filled the man with a sense of being alone in the world with her, while all its turmoil and dangers were as if forever shut away.

“Yes; she told Lazalie and me of it. And is it not too bad? Some of the sticks are broken; it must have dropped from one of the bundles.”

Her voice sank low and lower, and a fluttering, like that made by the wings of a startled wild bird, sounded in it.

Lafitte's hand had stolen over one of hers, and now held it close.

"Why are you here, little Rose, and not asleep, like the others, as you ought to be? You must be very tired."

"I was; but I could not sleep, and came up here for some air. It tired me still more to lie down in the cabin and not be able to keep my eyes shut. It was warm, too; and then I kept seeing it all over again."

She stopped abruptly, and he felt the shiver that ran through her shoulder where it touched his own.

"Do not let us speak of it, and try not to think about it," he said urgently, holding in check the mad desire to throw his arms about her and kiss the pale face now turned to look at him.

The suppression made his voice tremulous as he asked, forcing a laugh, and taking the fan from her hand, "Do you understand the language of the fan?"

"Somewhat," she answered, wondering at his apparent change of mood. "Lazalie has told me of it."

"Ah," said Lafitte, with a touch of what might have been either playfulness or sarcasm, "then you have had an excellent teacher. Yet I doubt if she ever evolved for you a sentence I should like to see if you can read."

"What is it? — let me try," she replied, her thoughts — as he intended they should be — diverted.

"I wonder if there are enough sticks in this small bauble," he continued, not seeming to have heard her; and bending his face closer, he counted them.

"One, two, three, four — yes, here are the eight, and five to spare, for all the fan is such a tiny one."

Then, having placed it in her hand, he added, speaking more softly, "There are the eight sticks, little Rose. Can you read what they say to you from me?"

The girl sat with bended head, her eyes fixed on the open fan she could see but indistinctly.

She was assailed by a torrent of sensations, awakened to life by the undertone of Lafitte's words and manner, for whose meaning intuition furnished the key, although the sentence made up of the eight ivory sticks was unknown to her.

"Can you read it?" he whispered, lowering his face to look into hers and again possessing himself of her hand.

Pure love between two kindred souls is, at times, a marvellously mystical thing—when a blinding flash of light carries the clearest understanding, without the aid of words.

At the sound of his voice, with his lips so close that his breath stirred her hair,—at the thrill of his touch,—at the mere realization of their being alone together, a strange exultation possessed the girl, lifting her spirit from its bodily enthrallment; and, half-swooning, yet acutely sensible, she read, as surely as though he had uttered them, "No words may say how I love you!"

It was as if an angel voice spoke to her inner senses; and dropping the fan into her lap, she covered her face with her hands.

"Can you read it?" he whispered once more, feeling that she was quivering, as from a nervous chill.

"No," she murmured faintly; but adding, woman-like, and in a stronger tone, "Tell me!"

He laughed, and rose to his feet. The laugh came from his exulting heart; and extending his hands to her, he said, with a new decision of manner, "Come, little Rose, this is very delightful, but not at all good for you. What would Madame Riefêt say to me if she knew where you were at this moment? I will take you below; and then you must go to sleep, like a good child."

He took her hand, and she permitted him to lead her down the narrow stairway to the cabin below.

"Some day—and soon," he said, as he left her at the

door of her little stateroom, "I will tell you, if indeed you know not already, what the fan said."

There was a smile in his voice; and something else, as well, that made her lashes droop to touch the flushed cheeks.

CHAPTER FIFTY-EIGHT

MADAME RIEFÊT found little to cavil at in the neat and comfortable, if somewhat primitive arrangements at Shell Island, which Lafitte and his party reached the afternoon following their departure from La Tête des Eaux.

Madame and the two girls were quartered in his own cabin, the prevailing atmosphere of which was — owing to the jumble of foreign furnishings that filled it — teak-wood and lacquer.

The outside door opened into a large, square living-room, at whose farther end, and directly opposite the entrance, was a huge fireplace, roughly made, in which the cheery fire of logs was now very acceptable, as there was a touch of chilliness in the air, redolent with wild-wood odors.

From either side of the living-room, doors opened into sleeping apartments; and a ladder led through an opening overhead to the floor above.

In these lower sleeping-rooms the beds were of carved teak-wood, and, after the Indian fashion, were suspended by heavy cords from the ceiling of rough logs, while in the living-room the handsome settees at either side of the fireplace were of Japanese woods and manufacture. And, although the dining table was of common pine, smaller tables and chairs of India and Chinese woods, elaborately carved, made the place a curiously incongruous, yet exceedingly comfortable, den.

Madame Riefêt, whose luxurious home held no such store of costly furniture and draperies, looked about with considerable amazement.

"What a very beautiful chair, Captain Lafitte! I never saw another one like it," she said, passing her fingers appreciatively over the dragons forming the arms of a chair he had drawn up, after urging her to be seated near the fire; for the lady had complained of feeling chilly.

"It is yours, my dear madame, if you will honor me by accepting it," he replied instantly, with a smile; and turning a deaf ear to her voluble remonstrances, he went out to the kitchen, where Scipio was, with Juniper's assistance, preparing a meal for the new-comers.

Rose de Cazeneuve was beside Lazalie, on one of the settees, with the Spanish girl's arm around her; and the two were watching the flames, before which sat Madame Riefêt.

After the excitement of the previous day, and not yet having recovered from their fatigue, the ladies were disposed to be more silent than usual; but presently Lazalie remarked, glancing around her, "How cheerful and pleasant it seems here! It is almost as if Captain Jean had known we were to come, and had prepared for our reception."

"If so, then I wish he might have known still more, so that my brother would have prepared for our protection at La Tête des Eaux, and thus saved us from this wild flight," said Madame Riefêt, as though determined to be dissatisfied.

"I suppose," she added, sighing deeply, "those dreadful brutes of English soldiers are now going through the house, pulling everything about. And, oh—all the beautiful linen that had to be left! I presume they will destroy everything they cannot steal."

"For my own part, I am so thankful to have escaped them that I cannot muster up the slightest regret over anything I have left for them to steal," declared Lazalie, who had been thinking of that other flight, when she left the Barra de Hierro, and escaped to New Orleans.

Mademoiselle de Cazeneuve had, so far as appearances

went, nothing to say upon the subject, which was now dropped.

Since Jackson and Claiborne accepted the allegiance of Barataria, Shell Island had been deserted by those who had made its former life boisterous. Only Scipio, Juniper, and Nato had remained; and to these were now added Baptistine and his crew, who were to stop only for the night. Lafitte alone knew, at first, how he had kept the three negroes, together with a generous supply of provisions, upon the island, so that they should be available in case emergency made it desirable to convey Rose de Cazeneuve to a safe retreat; but, later on, he had, for reasons of his own, taken Baptistine and Shapira into his confidence.

"I cannot understand, Captain Lafitte," said Madame Riefêt, with the air of being somewhat annoyed at the fact, "how you came to have such a correct opinion in regard to the possible movements of the English,—so much clearer ideas than those of any one else—even my brother."

They were all at the table, upon which Scipio and his coadjutors had placed the preliminary courses of a most appetizing meal; and the old negro was devoting much of his attention to Mademoiselle de Cazeneuve, urging her to let him put the various dainties upon her plate.

"Jes' yo' please try dese bit ob feesh, lil' Missy, wid a bit ob dese hominy; an' after dat, a nice slice ob ven'son," he said coaxingly, evidently wishing to air his English, or else supposing that she did not understand French. "La Capitaine Lafitte, he say ole Scipio done know bes' in dey worl' how cook eem."

She smiled up into his face, but offered no objection to his helping her; and Lafitte, who was watching the two, did not appear to have heard Madame Riefêt's remark, which was now repeated rather sharply, as if that lady were bent upon acquiring the information she sought.

"I beg your pardon, madame," he said, starting slightly, and turning to her.

"I wish you to tell us how you happened to entertain the opinion which has resulted in such benefit to us — I mean in regard to what the English were going to do?"

Her tone was quite caustic, and her sharp dark eyes regarded him speculatively over the rim of her sherry glass.

"I had, for some time, felt a misgiving that something of the sort was likely to occur, and I therefore prepared for it; that was all, madame."

He spoke hurriedly, and as if the matter held little interest, — while his eyes went back to the violet ones now looking at him.

"But, if you thought this, why was it that others — my brother, for instance — did not?" Madame persisted, putting down her glass, and taking up her fork with a vigor suggestive of an inclination to enforce an answer by sticking the silver prongs into Lafitte, rather than into the juicy venison steak upon her plate.

"That, madame, is a matter I can no more explain than can you yourself," he replied smilingly, but scarcely glancing at her.

"But you warned General La Roche, by telling him what you thought," declared Lazalie, "for he told us so, himself."

"Yes, señorita; I informed him of it several weeks since."

"And what did he say?" asked Lazalie; and Madame Riefêt answered with:

"You remember, Lazalie, that he, like others, declared such a thing to be impossible."

"General La Roche smiled at the idea," answered Lafitte, with a careless shrug of his shoulders.

"Well, I, for one, am thankful for your forethought, which has saved us from a meeting with those hateful Englishmen," said Lazalie, with a flash of her eyes that bespoke the inheritance of her uncle's hatred of that nation.

"Indeed, yes, Captain Lafitte; all of us have cause to

feel most grateful to you," Madame now admitted, in a more amiable tone. "But to think," she added, "of that cave being on the plantation, and none of us knowing anything about it?"

"Its secret was given to me some years since by an Indian chief," said Lafitte, and then, as if wishing to drop the matter, asked Madame Riefèt if she wished any message taken to her brother, as that night must find him returning to New Orleans, in order to report to General Jackson.

"If you can go why may not we?" she inquired with alacrity. "Surely, Captain Lafitte, you do not intend to go off and leave us alone in this desolate place?"

"Here is surely the safest place for you at present, madame." He smiled encouragingly at Rose de Cazeneuve, who was looking perturbed, while Lazalie shot a scornful glance at Madame, as if impatient at her show of fear.

"It would not be possible for me to conduct one lady, to say nothing of three, into the city by the route I must take," Lafitte continued. "Baptistine will take me part of my way, and will return within three days with your slaves and the other property left in the cave; and my slaves, with your own, will surely enable you to be comfortably housed here until it is possible to convey you to the city. I shall, no doubt, be able to come and go in the interim; and General La Roche will probably do the same. Meantime, dear madame, I repeat that, until the English shall have been driven from about New Orleans, this little island is the safest retreat you could possibly have. It lies entirely out of the way of any surprise from either the English or Americans, for none of them know the way hither, and few of them are aware of the island's existence."

Madame, with a sigh, sought relief in a silence that was acquiescing; and she could not but admit to herself that, in the present annoying predicament, the mysterious life of Barataria had proved to possess certain advantages.

CHAPTER FIFTY-NINE

LATER in the day, Madame Riefêt, who had been attacked by a nervous headache, was lying down in one of the bedrooms on the lower floor, and Lazalie sat reading aloud to her, the Spanish girl's rich voice being the only sound to break the stillness of the cabin, where in the open doorway Rose de Cazeneuve sat listlessly, her chin in her palms, and her eyes straying to the primitive out-of-door world around her.

Nature had made the place very beautiful; and, shut away in its solitude and peace, it was difficult for one to realize that the clamor of war was so close at hand.

Except for the cleared spaces near the cabins, forest trees rose all about, and, along the river, reached by a path leading from the door of Lafitte's house, their roots were almost in the water.

The surroundings were rich with a splendor of tropical verdure; and from out the thicker forest lying back of the cabins a crystal stream bubbled along its tortuous way, tumbling down between ferny boulders and making moss-rimmed pools that, mirror-like, reflected the dainty growths nodding over them.

So quiet was the place that the sound of voices echoed as in a dryad's world of peace and irresponsible nature, where the lulling song of water, the rustle of leaves, and the music of unseen birds broke, for a moment's space, the calm, only to make its hush all the greater.

Amid such environments Rose de Cazeneuve felt at home; for, since her babyhood, nature had been her foster-mother, and its phases her most intimate friends.

So wrapped was she now in dreams as not to know that Lafitte had come from Scipio's domain, and through the room back of her, until, standing above her, he asked gently, and with a smile, "Are you performing guard duty, little Rose? Must I give the countersign before I can pass out?"

A vivid flush mantled her cheeks as she sprang up and turned to face him.

"I am sorry if I startled you," he said, coming outside; and taking off his broad-brimmed hat he pushed the curling locks from his forehead.

"It was only that I had forgotten myself in my surroundings," she explained, her eyes lowering before his curiously intent gaze. "They remind me of my old home." And she waved one hand in a comprehensive gesture.

"Yes, I think this is somewhat like your island home," he assented, still looking at her as before, with an expression as if he might now be regarding her for the first time. Then, as if from impulse, he took her hand.

"Little Rose," he said, a slight tremor sounding in his voice, "I must, as you know, leave here to-night, and there can be no telling when I may return, or what may happen before you and I meet again. I have a story to relate—one I have longed to tell you; and I have a strong desire—arising from something far more than mere sentiment—as to the place where I should like you to hear it. The spot is not far from here—only a little way through the woods. Will you come with me, and listen to my story?"

"Shall I not tell Lazalie? Perhaps she will wonder—she and madame, if they miss me."

She spoke hurriedly and nervously; but, lifting her eyes to his, she saw such an impressive solemnity in their dark depths that something impelled her to add, in the submissive tone of an obedient child, "Yes, Captain Jean, I will come with you."

As the man and girl took their way side by side, Lazalie

appeared in the doorway. Her eyes blazed, and her scarlet under-lip was caught fiercely between the white teeth, as she saw Lafitte reach out one hand to clasp that of his companion, while with the other he cleared a bush from the path. Then they moved on, and were shut from sight by the trees.

"Aha! I thought so!" the Spanish girl said to herself, the last word ending in a sigh, as she turned away and began pacing the floor.

"I hate him, and I ought to hate her. Hate her? No, I cannot do that, my sweet Rose. You are not responsible for having the same fever that once possessed me. And who could help loving you? As for him, he long ago gave me to understand plainly that I might claim nothing more than friendship from him."

She laughed bitterly as that last day on the Barra de Hierro rose before her, bringing with it an increase of color to her cheeks at thought of her past lack of maidenliness.

"Do I really love the man now, or is it only my injured pride that would make him love me? Make him! Pah, — what is the worth of love that has to be forced? There is no question of forced love with La Roche, and he has been very good to me. He is a man, every inch of him, and a very handsome man."

Her face softened, her haughty head drooped, and the angry fire died from her eyes.

Ma'am Brigida now appeared at one of the bedroom doors. She was rubbing her eyes, whose appearance, together with her flushed cheeks and dishevelled hair, told that she had but just aroused from slumber.

"Madame is asleep?" she asked in a whisper, coming over to where Lazalie stood looking out of the doorway.

The girl nodded.

"Oh, my treasure, why would ye not let me read to her? Sure that swate throat must ache with the doin' of it."

Lazalie only smiled, and went outside to sit on the step,

while Brigida, after ensconcing herself on the door-sill, continued to lament over her nursling's self-imposed task, ending with, "The sound of your swate voice lulled me off to sleep, so it did; otherwise I'd have been as wide-awake as yerself. To be sure, I'm tired; an' by the same token we all are tired, after such crazy doin's as yesterday brought to us. An' Zeney lyin' dead, shot like a dog by that crazy spalpeen of a British spy, an' lyin' buried out in the woods, with niver a coffin. Ach — anee — anee! I wonder what-iver calamity will be fallin' on us next. But, thanks be to Captain Jean, we've been spared the worst that might have come to us."

Meanwhile, and scarcely forty yards from the lamenting Brigida, Rose de Cazeneuve stood with Lafitte beside what seemed — from the wooden cross marking it — to be a grave. It was a long, narrow mound, already rich with brilliant wood-growths; and the forest shut it away from sight of the cabins.

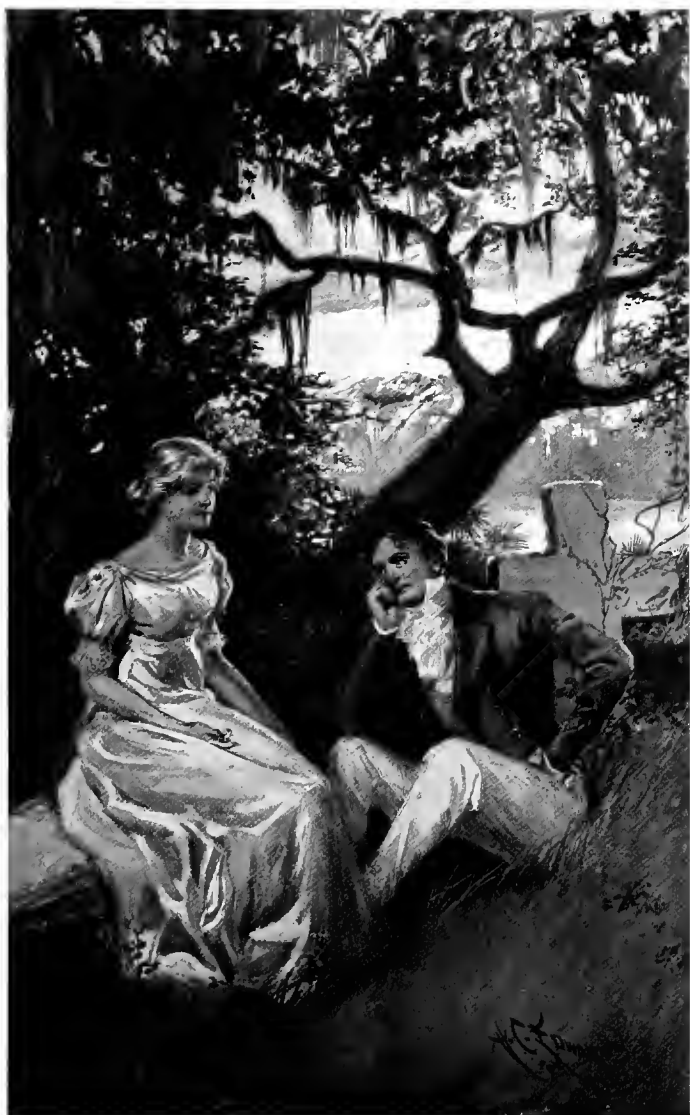
Obeying silently the motion of his hand, she seated herself upon a fallen tree, where the moss, thick as a rug, made a covering soft as velvet. Lafitte then sat down upon the ground before her, — with his back against the mound, the cross making a rest for his bared head.

"This, little Rose, is Pierre's grave, — Pierre Lafitte, known to the world as my brother; and never was a brother more true of heart or lovable than he, although not a drop of kindred blood ran in our veins."

The listening girl's amazement was manifest not only in her face, but in her voice, as she exclaimed, "What! Pierre Lafitte not your brother, Captain Jean?"

"No, — nor any blood relation whatever. But of this I will tell you presently. What I wish to say now is, that he talked to me of you, little Rose, just before he died; your name was the last that came from his lips."

"Mine?" she said in surprise. "I spoke to him only once, Captain Jean, and then it was but a few words, when he came to the house, seeking grandpère."



"Yes; but he saw you more than once, even if you did not know it—do not remember it. And once was sufficient for what I mean."

A new fire now drove the sad look from his eyes, fixed upon Rose, who sat with eyes downcast, and hands clasped.

He sighed, and gave his head an upward toss, as if to throw off the thoughts begotten by his allusion to Pierre's death; and then, as if reading from a book, he told her of the Languedoc home, where he and Pierre had spent their childhood; of his father, Monsieur le Baron; of Napoleon, the young officer of his boyish idolatry. He told of Margot, and Père Huot—of all the persons connected with his life.

Rose listened intently, her face reflecting the feelings and emotions aroused by Lafitte's story; and, more than once, a mist of tears dimmed the violet eyes, perhaps a moment before filled with indignation.

He omitted altogether, or touched lightly upon, whatever might have shocked her, leaving out any mention of Étienne, beyond saying that the maliciousness of an elder half-brother had been the cause of his leaving his father's house and assuming the name of his foster-mother.

He said little in regard to his life with Laro, but told fully of the meeting with Greloire, at Martinique, which had aroused his better self.

At this, a small hand stole from its fellow's clasp, and was held out to him. He took it, and pressed his lips to the soft fingers. Then, after releasing it gently, he went on with his narrative.

He told of his visit to Elba; of the interview with Napoleon; of the promise he had made, and his efforts to fulfil it; of his temporary loss of resolution after the descent upon Barataria, and of its full renewal at Pierre's death.

As he described that scene in the moonlit cell, her tears flowed freely; and at sight of them a strange smile touched Lafitte's lips.

"Ah, my Pierre," he murmured, bending to lay his face against the wood-flowers upon his foster-brother's grave, "other eyes than thy Jean's can weep for thee!"

As he raised his head Rose de Cazeneuve stretched out both hands to him.

"Captain Jean — oh, Captain Jean," she sobbed, "how could I have had such hard, wicked thoughts of you? It surely was because I never knew you until now!"

"And do you know me now?" he asked, sitting erect, and clasping the extended hands.

She looked down into his face, filled with a light such as the face of Jean Lafitte had never before shown.

"Do you know me now, little Rose? If so, then it is well; for that is what I wished should be before I depart forever from Louisiana."

"Depart forever from Louisiana!" she repeated; and the dismay in her voice made his heart leap.

"Would you care — would you miss me?" And his clasp tightened upon her imprisoned hands.

"Rose — my little Island Rose," he said, seeking to look under the lashes that swept her cheeks, "when my duty to New Orleans and Jackson is ended, as ended it soon must be, I shall return to France, to be Monsieur le Baron, my father's son, in the old Languedoc château — a thing my emperor's love has made possible, and which will enable me to be nearer him, the man I have shown you how I loved and still love. Will you go with me, little Rose, to be presented to him as my baronne — as my wife?"

The tears were running from beneath the lowered lashes as she laid her cheek against one of the hands that held her own; and a bird's song thrilled out with joyous melody as he reached up and drew her face to him.

There is an eastern legend telling that when Paradise was fading from earth an angel plucked and saved a single rose, which, ever treasured, is imbued with fragrance immortal.

To every mortal is given, sooner or later, a breath of this fragrance, which brings joy beyond all that earth can give.

This hour had surely brought to the storm-tossed, ever-battling soul of Jean Lafitte his breath of the angel's rose of Paradise, to abide, as a benediction of unspeakable peace, forever.

CHAPTER SIXTY

THE battle of New Orleans had been fought and won.

It proved, so far as the result of the war was affected, a needless victory, inasmuch as, fifteen days before, at Ghent, a treaty of peace had been concluded between the United States and Great Britain.

But the triumph was, in its completeness, and by reason of the means through which it had been achieved, of inestimable and lasting benefit to this country.

It proved that the spirit which had inspired the men of the Revolution still animated those who survived that memorable struggle, and that it had descended, unimpaired, to their sons; that the bravery and devotion which had created the Republic were still alive for its preservation. It proved that American freemen, although lacking in discipline, and poorly armed, could repel and defeat a greatly superior force of veteran soldiers, rich with all the material and panoply of war, — the flower of Britain's army, fresh from its victories in Spain.

History tells how much of Jackson's success was due to the loyalty, intelligence, and bravery of Lafitte and his Baratarians; it says, aside from this, that but for the warning and information given to the former by Lafitte, New Orleans could not have been saved.

During the short campaign preceding the battle of January 8th, 1815, the Baratarians, through their intimate knowledge of the country, proved themselves invaluable as spies and scouts; and when the two armies met in conflict, the experience and skill of the former "outlaws," as artil-

lerymen and riflemen — the rapidity and accuracy of their fire, their coolness and judgment — these not only contributed directly and powerfully to the result, but inspired with confidence the American troops — many of them raw, and ill accoutred — amongst whom they fought.

General Jackson was quick to recognize this, during the battle and afterwards, in his Reports and General Orders.

In one of the latter, dated January 15, 1815, he said, after paying a high tribute to Lafitte:

“Captains Dominique-You and Beluche, lately commanding privateers at Barataria, with part of their former crews, and many brave citizens of New Orleans, were stationed at batteries Nos. 3 and 4. The general cannot avoid giving his warm approbation of the manner in which these gentlemen have uniformly conducted themselves while under his command, and of the gallantry with which they have redeemed the pledge they gave at the opening of the campaign, to defend the country.”

Ten days after the battle all that was left of Pakenham's defeated army had embarked for England, and the city of New Orleans gave itself up to joy and festivity.

At a dinner given by Governor Claiborne, at which Lafitte was an honored guest, the latter's health was proposed by the governor; and Jackson, after joining in the toast, stated that he should bespeak for Captain Lafitte a high official position at the hands of the President of the United States.

But the former Baratarian leader, after an eloquent response, declined the general's offer, and then announced his approaching marriage to the granddaughter of the late Count de Cazeneuve.

This was received in a way that again brought him to his feet in order to bow acknowledgments of his fellow-guests' good-will.

Governor Claiborne then proposed the health of the bride-elect, and when this had been drunk with all the honors, General La Roche, in replying on behalf of

the young lady, announced his own engagement to the Señorita Lazalie.

Renewed applause now broke forth, to be checked by Jackson, who said, after a vigorous thumping upon the table had restored order, "Gentlemen, let us, if you please, make a little less noise, for fear those outside may think we are, because of the absence of the ladies, lacking in proper dignity."

Young Harold Stewart, who was seated nearly opposite the general, ventured, with the assurance of a favorite to reply with boyish enthusiasm, "But, General Jackson, we don't have a Captain Jean Lafitte to toast every night!"

"No; nor are we old campaigners accustomed to have boys lift up their voices in our midst every night. Eh, colonel?"

The twinkle in Jackson's eyes gave the negative to the sarcasm of his words; and the smilingly spoken question was put to a brown-haired, broad-shouldered officer a few seats below.

Colonel Thomas Stewart, handsome in middle age as he had been in youth, laughed.

"No, general — not as a usual thing; but then, you see, Harold is a chip of the old block."

The good feeling of Jackson, Claiborne and the citizens of New Orleans toward Lafitte, and their appreciation of the loyal and important services rendered by him, extended to all his once outlawed followers: and President Madison, in his proclamation of pardon, used these words:

"But it has been represented that the offenders have manifested a sincere repentance; that they have abandoned the worst cause for the support of the best; and particularly that they have exhibited in the defence of New Orleans unequivocal traits of courage and fidelity. Offenders who have refused to become the associates of the enemy in war, upon the most seducing terms of invitation, and who have aided to repel his hostile invasion

of the territory of the United States, can no longer be considered as objects of punishment, but as objects of a generous forgiveness."

Beluche received an important official appointment in South America; and after the death of Dominique-You, some years later, the city of New Orleans erected a monument to his memory.

It is true that some of the more adventurous Baratarians relapsed into their former pursuits; but their operations were carried on [in foreign seas, and Louisiana knew them no more. There is also good reason for suspecting that one of these, more intelligent than his fellows, assumed the name of their former great leader, and, in 1819 or 1820, made a stronghold upon the site of what is now the city of Galveston in Texas.

From this came one of the stories relating to Lafitte's career subsequent to the battle of New Orleans; another being that he resumed his former practices, and had been drowned at sea, while still another states that he died in Yucatan. But a fourth story claims that he was, as late as 1830, seen in France, and that, some years after this, his widow was known to be living in a château near the upper bank of the Loire.

Certain it is that, with the sails of the "Black Petrel" turning slowly from the golden glow of sunset, near the land, to the cold gray of the far-off sea line, and then to pearl, ere they faded from sight, vanished Lafitte of Louisiana.

"Things that make and things that mar
Shape the man for perfect praise;
Shock and strain and ruin are
Friendlier than the smiling days."

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